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A Collaborative Challenger:
Using WikiLeaks to Map the Contours of the Journalistic Paradigm

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A Collaborative Challenger:

Using WikiLeaks to Map the Contours of the Journalistic Paradigm>

by

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

For my wife, Dana, who through her patience, grace, and encouragement has been my rock throughout graduate school and beyond.

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes much to the guidance of my first reader, Steve Reese. It was Dr. Reese who introduced me to the concepts of paradigm repair and boundary work, who encouraged me to turn this project from a term paper for one of his classes into a master's thesis, and who urged me to submit an early version of this work to an academic journal. Dr. Reese has also been a continual source of sage advice throughout this project, consistently pushing me to rethink my assumptions and re-evaluate my methods, findings, and their implications. All of the errors of this thesis are my own, but Dr. Reese has been an invaluable guide for a significant amount of the insight that lies in it.

Several other people were crucial sources of advice and feedback in this project. My second reader, Homero Gil de Zúñiga, has taught a great deal about drawing a compelling argument from mountains of data. My colleague C. W. Anderson has provided great encouragement and stimulation for thought on a variety of projects, particularly in helping think through the concept of original reporting in this one. And the three anonymous reviewers at *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* also provided remarkably helpful feedback at a critical juncture in this project.

Most of all, I thank my wife, Dana, who has been unfailingly patient, understanding, and loving throughout the trying transition to graduate school and academic life. None of this would have been possible were it not for her sacrifices.

Thank you all.

Abstract

A Collaborative Challenger:
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As institutional and professional journalism faces increasing uncertainty about its financial security and social influence, it is also being challenged by emerging forms of networked journalism that rely on open, network-based flows of information. In 2010, one of those networked groups, WikiLeaks, rose to prominence through a series of large, high-profile leaks of government information. Drawing on the concepts of paradigm repair and professional boundary work, this study examined the way numerous professional news organizations portrayed WikiLeaks as being beyond the bounds of professional journalism.

Through a textual analysis of discourse about WikiLeaks from the group's inception in 2006 through early 2011, the study found that the American professional news media depicted WikiLeaks as unreliable, unstable deviants who maliciously and indiscriminately released information rather than properly performing journalism. The discourse portrayed WikiLeaks as being outside journalism's professional norms in four primary areas: institutionality, reporter-source relationships, original reporting, and objectivity. In doing so, professional journalists defended those domains against

WikiLeaks' networked alternative, reasserting their own social value and authority by arguing for the superiority of their professional journalistic model. Discourse from professional media criticism, conservative and liberal alternative news media, and European journalism was also examined, using the response to WikiLeaks to help form a a map of several areas of the journalistic sphere in terms of their adherence to the paradigmatic tenets of professional journalism. The WikiLeaks case provides a useful guide for evaluating future interactions between professional and networked journalism, particularly professional journalism's evolving self-definition vis-à-vis its emerging networked counterpart.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

On July 25, 2010, the transparency activist group WikiLeaks made public one of the largest intelligence leaks in American military history, releasing about 77,000 pages of internal U.S. military documents from the war in Afghanistan. In an unprecedented arrangement, three news organizations, the *New York Times* of the United States, Britain's *Guardian*, and Germany's *Der Spiegel*, were given a few weeks to peruse the documents, add context with their own reporting, and publish their reports as a shared exclusive to coincide with WikiLeaks' public release (Davies, 2010).

For the *Times*, the "war log" report led off the front page on a Sunday, and formed the centerpiece of a stylized multimedia package online. ("The war logs," n.d.). But when addressing WikiLeaks over the following six months, *Times* executive editor Bill Keller belittled it and took pains to separate the *Times* from it, rather than praising the organization that gave his newspaper arguably its biggest scoop in 2010. He chastised the group for its "glib antipathy toward the United States" (Keller, 2011a, para. 68), characterized its leader, Julian Assange, as "arrogant, thin-skinned, conspiratorial and oddly credulous" (para. 11), and repeatedly emphasized the *Times*' independence from WikiLeaks (Brisbane, 2010; Folkenflik, 2010; "The war logs articles," 2010).

This might seem like an oddly belligerent way for a news editor to talk about an important source or collaborator, particularly in public. But Keller's comments were not simply the product of eccentricity or personal distaste; instead, they were part of an effort to marginalize WikiLeaks in order to bolster the *Times*' own status as an elite standard-bearer of modern journalism. This aim was likely not a conscious, explicit one for Keller, but it was illustrative of a larger coolness toward WikiLeaks among the *Times* and other traditional media organizations during late 2010 and early 2011 as WikiLeaks ascended to public prominence through a series of increasingly disruptive intelligence leaks.

The connection between these two sides of those organizations' discourse—the politics of self-justification and the ostracism of WikiLeaks—is what this study aims to explore: Why did the *New York Times* and other news organizations feel the need to distance itself from WikiLeaks in order to preserve their own authority, even as they relied on the group for information? In what specific ways did they portray WikiLeaks as being deviant or inferior? And what does that tell us about the way the traditional news media conceive of themselves as a profession?

This study has WikiLeaks as its topic, but its primary aim is not to gain understanding about WikiLeaks. Rather, its intent is to explore the response to WikiLeaks from media in a variety of spheres, from professional journalism to media criticism to liberal and conservative alternative media. By doing so, I hope to explain how and why news organizations distanced themselves from WikiLeaks, and in particular, what that discourse can reveal about the ways those news organizations see themselves vis-à-vis the ascendant form of networked journalism that WikiLeaks embodies. With its globally decentralized structure, blend of advocacy and journalism, and belief in the power of unfettered flows of information, WikiLeaks is one of the world's most prominent practitioners of networked journalism, a broadly based model that shifts the gathering and dissemination of information from more linear, institutional processes to open flows based in less hierarchical networks (Anderson, forthcoming; Beckett & Ball, 2012; Benkler, 2011). The professional news media exist in uneasy tension with this networked journalistic model, with some professional journalists embracing many aspects of it (Paton, 2011; Rusbridger, 2012) and others—sometimes within the same news organizations—resisting it (Applebaum, 2010a; Keller, 2011b). Other works have examined this tension from within newsrooms themselves (e.g., Paterson & Domingo, 2008), but this study will do so through an exploration of journalists' public discourse regarding a prominent networked journalistic actor. The discourse about WikiLeaks among journalists can help illuminate their views not only of network journalism itself, but also of professional journalism's relationship to it, including its distinctions, similarities, and convergences.

Two theoretical concepts derived from the sociology of science are particularly useful in that pursuit—paradigm repair and boundary work. Both concepts describe processes by which journalists and other professions reinforce their own social authority when confronted with actors or neighboring institutions that they perceive as threats, just as WikiLeaks was perceived in this case. The two processes are quite similar, but arise from different theoretical roots and manifest themselves in slightly different fashion. The following section will introduce and describe both paradigm repair and boundary work, then briefly explore how the two processes might interact.

PARADIGM REPAIR

Paradigm repair is rooted in the constructivist idea that certain groups develop a shared set of values that they use to create and organize knowledge, and also to define themselves and maintain their own authority. Those groups often respond to cases that challenge their values by portraying the actors involved in it as anomalous in order to distance themselves from the case and preserve their own collective authority.

The research on paradigm repair stems from Kuhn's concept of paradigms, which he defined in part as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 175). These paradigms take the form of accepted models or patterns that serve as the group's guiding principles in organizing and presenting information, allowing the group's members to avoid having to continually re-examine their foundational principles and instead focus on developing higher-order concepts. Though they are occasionally expressed in explicit forms such as professional codes, paradigms are often unspoken, and often lack even an agreed-upon rationalization (Kuhn, 1970, p. 49). Because of this taken-for-granted status, paradigms function (often in tandem with professionalization) to limit their communities' range of inquiry, closing off issues and alternative approaches that are not compatible with their form (Kuhn, 1970, p. 37). These limitations become part of the paradigms' perceived status as social reality, which can lead them to become circular or self-referential (Bennett, Gressett, & Haltom, 1985) or self-contradicting (Reese, 1990) because they derive their authority from an idea of objective reality that is itself created by the paradigm.

Paradigms are periodically confronted with anomalies—cases that share some characteristics of the larger paradigm but diverge in ways that challenge the paradigm itself, leaving the group with the option of either adjusting the paradigm to fit the case or casting it as entirely outside the paradigm in order to restore faith in the paradigm from both within and outside the group. Groups typically choose the latter (Bennett et al., 1985; Hindman, 2003), in an attempt to defend not only the paradigm itself, but the "imagined collective subscription to this paradigm" (Berger, 2010, p. 226)—the illusion that the paradigm is universally accepted. The way they attempt this "repair work" (Tuchman, 1978) can reveal much about the nature of the paradigm and the community that holds it, especially the communal values they share and the dynamics by which they regulate them (Meyers, 2011, p. 262). No single case can reveal the whole of a paradigm, though a varying set of cases can help illuminate the contours of a particular paradigm (Bennett et al., 1985; Reese, 1990).

Journalism displays many of the characteristics of a paradigm-guided field. It is marked by many elements of professionalization, particularly in regard to its closely guarded professional training, and it is defined by a set of commonly held norms and routines (Becker & Vlad, 2009; Bennett et al., 1985; Singer, 2003). Like many paradigms, the journalistic paradigm reinforces hegemony by narrowing the potential range of frames for news stories and privileging the perspectives of powerful actors (Reese, 1990). The journalistic paradigm has commonly been conceived of as consisting of the principles of balance and objectivity—a descendant of empirical positivism (Hackett, 1984; Reese, 1990)—as well as hierarchical organizational structures, a shared identity professionalism, and, more recently, an animosity toward blogs and unsanctioned digital expressions of news (Carlson, 2012; McCoy, 2001; Ruggiero, 2004).

The journalistic paradigm repair process has been well documented by scholars. The process is a ritual (Berkowitz & Eko, 2007) with two primarily performative dimensions: One, oriented toward the public, to argue for the validity of the paradigm, and the other to help define and reinforce the paradigm in order to reassure the members of the journalistic community itself (Berkowitz, 2000; Cecil, 2002). The means by which this is done fall into two general categories: journalists assert the value and effectiveness of the paradigm while distancing themselves from and minimizing the perceived threat, thus allowing them to both acknowledge the paradigmatic challenge and assert their superiority over it (Hindman, 2003; Reese, 1990). These strategies often play out in the opinion sections of news media content (Bicket & Wall, 2007; Cecil, 2002), though they can take place in news content as well, particularly for matters that do not directly involve objectivity (Handley, 2008). In both spaces, journalists often accomplish paradigm repair by using experts to affirm their own opinions (Bennett et al., 1985) and re-presenting their paradigms anew to audiences (Berkowitz & Eko, 2007).

As Carlson (2012) and Meyers (2011) point out, research on journalistic paradigm repair has typically been applied to individual cases where journalists deviate—often ethically—from the paradigmatic norms either unknowingly or surreptitiously. But journalists also act to defend themselves from more intentional, non-episodic challenges that offer viable alternatives or sustained threats to their paradigm (Carlson, 2012; Meyers, 2011). Meyers refers to these as "paradigmatic challenges," while Carlson incorporates them into his concept of "second-order paradigm repair," in which journalists generalize a single paradigmatic threat as broadly significant across the profession, rather than isolating it as deviant as often occurs in paradigm repair (Carlson, 2012, p. 268). Carlson's and Meyers' reconceived notions of paradigm repair are particularly relevant to the case of WikiLeaks: The group is more characteristic of an ongoing paradigmatic challenge than a single deviant actor traditionally studied in paradigm repair. Unlike those actors, WikiLeaks portrays itself as trustworthy and presents a sustained challenge and viable networked alternative to the professional journalistic paradigm. The paradigm repair performed in this case is not second-order paradigm repair, because journalists still portrayed WikiLeaks as deviant and focused on it in particular as a threat rather than engaging in larger ideas about the profession. Still, it shares some commonalities with second-order repair, especially in that journalists are not responding to a public outcry, but instead trying to marshal public support for their cause (Carlson, 2012).

BOUNDARY WORK

Like paradigm repair, the concept of boundary work is based in the study of how scientists define their bodies of knowledge and attempt to protect their social authority. As conceived by Gieryn (1983), boundary work involves a field's attribution of certain characteristics to itself to create a social boundary between it and adjacent fields, typically as an attempt to assert the field's autonomy and enlarge its material and social resources (Gieryn, 1983, p. 782). These boundaries give fields social power and the authority to define themselves and their ideas (Dahlgren, 1992; Gieryn & Figert, 1986) and help accelerate their professionalization (Bishop, 1999; Winch, 1997), though, as we will see in the case of WikiLeaks, they do not necessarily preclude collaboration between fields (Riesch, 2010). These boundaries are often indistinct and moving (Winch, 1997), so they can become sites for what Abbott calls "jurisdictional disputes" between neighboring professions (Abbott, 1988).

When these disputes occur, journalists' cultural authority is at risk of being "undermined by a blurring of distinctions between what they do and the work of other mass communicators" (Frank, 2003, p. 448). Boundary work is an attempt to re-establish these distinctions and re-assert professional journalism's authority in the face of such threats. Gieryn (1983) identifies three primary goals behind boundary work: expanding authority to other realms, monopolizing authority in a given realm, and protecting a profession's autonomy. The second of those goals—monopolizing social authority and resources—is most applicable to WikiLeaks' case; in these situations, boundary work allows a profession to paint others as deviant outsiders (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792). If performed successfully, boundary work expels its target from the profession being maintained and deflects attention from the structural flaws in the profession that made the challenge possible (Winch, 1997).

Within professional journalism, this definitional rhetoric is commonly exercised by insiders through public self-criticism, defining what journalism is or is not through dichotomous distinctions such as professional/amateur, responsible/irresponsible, and ethical/unethical (Winch, 1997, p. 155). This self-criticism is performed for public consumption as part of the journalistic routine, with the goal to make differences between the profession and the target clear to observers (Bishop, 1999; Wall & Bicket, 2008). If the intended audience indicates its lack of interest in this definitional rhetoric through low ratings and page views or resists it through oppositional comments in online channels, the boundary work may appear staged, and the boundaries may seem like simulations and remain undefined (Bishop, 2004).

Connecting Paradigm Repair and Boundary Work

Paradigm repair and boundary work are substantially similar processes. Both involve distancing the profession from an actor deemed deviant in order to restore trust in the profession and reinforce its social authority. In many cases when the two concepts have been addressed in the same study, researchers have either used them interchangeably or made no appreciable distinction between them (Berkowitz & Eko, 2007; Bicket & Wall, 2007; Meyers, 2011; Wall & Bicket, 2008). Frank (2003, p. 442) asserts that the two are indistinguishable to the extent that paradigm repair involves journalists making distinctions regarding whether work has been done according to professional norms, and Bishop (1999) uses language of boundary work throughout his study, then switches to a distinction between simulated and real paradigm repair to describe the case at hand in the conclusion.

There are subtle but significant distinctions, however, to be made between the two concepts. While both concepts are readily applied to instances of direct criticism of journalistic institutions and ideologies, boundary work has been more relevant to the less-explicit and more systemic challenges to the authority of the journalistic field, such as the blogosphere's emergence as news sources (Carlson, 2007; Ruggiero & Winch, 2005) and, in this case, the implicit challenge of WikiLeaks' networked journalism to professional journalism's more institutional form. This is because boundary work tends to arise from disputes over who has jurisdiction over contested cultural space—a more implicit and potentially greater threat than from the anomalies to which paradigm repair typically responds. The recent revisions of paradigm repair by Meyers (2011) and Carlson (2012) have helped expand the concept to address these more implicit challenges, but when compared in their fundamental forms, boundary work remains more suited toward such implicit challenges.

The two concepts can, in fact, complement each other well in this case. Because WikiLeaks is not a single rogue actor but part of a competing, networked approach to journalism, boundary work does much of the work of distancing the threatening actor and fortifying the boundaries of the profession, while paradigm repair parries the direct criticism aimed at the paradigm as a result of WikiLeaks' challenge. In this way, both concepts are parts of the same process, serving the same purpose—justifying and reinforcing norms of the journalistic profession in the face of perceived threats.

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTIC PARADIGM

In order to examine the ways in which WikiLeaks presented a challenge to the dominant journalistic paradigm and how journalists defended their professional authority, an outline of the paradigm being challenged must first be drawn. While there are numerous dimensions to this paradigm—including such characteristics as a profit orientation, independence from advertisers, and the perception of breaking news as a valuable commodity—this study will examine the particular dimensions that were violated by WikiLeaks. These dimensions emerged out of the repair and boundary work discourse itself, as will be discussed in further detail in the methods section later in the following chapter. The three dimensions of the professional journalistic paradigm to be examined here are institutionality, source-based reporting routines, original reporting, and objectivity.

Institutionality

Institutions are a central orienting element within bureaucratic society (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983); they are rules and procedures that help structure behavior, decision-making, and values within realms of social life (Cook, 1998; North, 1990; Sparrow, 1999), often being expressed and reinforced within formal organizations or sets of organizations (Tolbert, 1988; Zucker, 1988). Like paradigms themselves, institutions both reinforce their own authority and delimit the range of actions and decisions available to them (Sparrow, 1999). The characteristics of institutionality are evident in the professional news media, both on the organizational and the inter-organizational level: At the latter level, professional journalism exhibits a remarkable amount of homogeneity and isomorphism, both in the content it produces (Boczkowski, 2010; Franklin, 2011) and the practices and procedures that guide it (Cook, 1998; Lowrey & Woo, 2010). Professional news organizations also exert significant authority over other areas of the social order, including the political sphere and the public, primarily through their control over the information and narratives that help constitute public life (Sparrow, 1999; Robinson, 2007). Journalists themselves have also often conceived of themselves as an institution, exhibiting a professional identity that draws on common ethical values and social roles (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). The organizational level is also an important dimension of journalism's institutionality, as the organization is the primary site for the transmission of and socialization into these institutional values, both through hierarchical structures and individual relationships, such as the one between reporter and editor (Schudson, 1989; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Dunaway, 2011).

Digital and networked models of journalism have presented a significant challenge to the news media's institutionality. The Internet has vastly broadened the pool of actors able to publish valuable information and gain social and cultural influence, diluting the news media's institutional authority over those capabilities. Institutions are also resistant to technological change itself; their form lends itself to evolutionary change rather than the more revolutionary change occasioned by the rise of digital technologies (Robinson, 2007). The news media as an institution have followed this pattern, only adopting technological changes insofar as they do not radically disrupt established routines and norms (Hermida, 2009; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008), and such adoptions have typically amounted only to skin-deep, temporary changes (Lowrey & Woo, 2010). journalists have repeatedly articulated this institutional resistance to change in their discourse about new media, portraying bloggers and online journalists in anti-organizational terms, as individualists unaccountable for their views inhabiting an unchecked online space (Benkler, 2011; Carlson, 2007; Lowrey, 2006; Singer, 2003). Still, Anderson (forthcoming) found that institutions are necessary to the success of networked journalism, in their ability to form stable hubs for news networks and to direct significant resources toward technological innovation.

Reporter-Source Relationships

While institutionality is the primary driver of professional journalistic values on a macro level, the everyday form of the news is shaped most significantly by the interactions between journalists and their official sources. As Schudson (1989) memorably described it, "the story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of interaction of reporters and officials" (p. 271). In part through its embeddedness in institutionality, this relationship helps shape the social reality in which journalists situate their reports of the news. Journalists accept the administratively structured knowledge of their official sources and their beats as the reality against which news is interpreted (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989; Whitney & Ettema, 2003). At the core of journalist-source relationships is a particular arrangement marked by mutual dependence, as each side offers exclusive access to resources that the other values—officials need publicity and influence, and reporters need a steady supply of "newsworthy" information (Bennett, 2004; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Sigal, 1973). The two groups also depend on one another to uphold their own legitimacy—journalists help construct sources' legitimacy in the public's imagination (Bennett, 2004), and sources give legitimacy to journalists' reports, allowing them to cite information as facts without further investigation (Carlson, 2009; Ericson et al., 1989).

This symbiotic relationship produces and depends on what Blumler and Gurevitch (1981) called a "shared culture"—a set of common social values and role definitions, as if reporters and officials are "playing a game with more or less agreed-upon rules" (p. 482). Through this shared culture built on mutual trust, the two groups act together to form a composite source, constructing authority and meaning together (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Ericson et al., 1989). The shared culture certainly contains some conflict, as journalists and sources negotiate over the authority to shape it and over the particular roles they play (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981; Ericson et al., 1989). But that day-to-day conflict does not shake the general balance of power in the relationship, which remains disproportionately influenced by sources' administrative culture (Berkowitz, 1992; Larsson, 2002). This imbalance within the shared culture causes journalism's institutional ideology to be substantially shaped by a group outside of the institution itself—official sources, typically within government and business. Because of that significant outside influence, individuals cannot fully share in the ideology while rejecting a relationship with this outside group. The chief effect of the pervasiveness of this shared culture is that journalists report not on reality but on the cultural product of their interaction with sources, and the news is "not so much an account of what happened as it is a compilation of what officials say about what happened" (Whitney & Ettema, 2003, p. 164). This makes newswork reactive, as journalists become dependent on their sources, even to their own competitive detriment within the profession (Reich, 2006; Franklin, 2011).

The challenge of networked journalism is much less explicit to reporter-source relationships than it is to institutionality. Though some of the features of networked journalism—notably, hyperlinks—connect users directly to sources (Carlson & Franklin, 2011; Coddington, 2011), many of the practitioners of online journalism who operate outside its professional boundaries simply have no competitive alternative to the authority conferred by this shared culture. Reich (2008) found that official sources do not typically perceive citizen journalism outlets as desirable forums in which to appear, leading citizen reporters to be shut out of routine reporter-source exchanges, such as press conferences, conference calls, and press releases (741). In lieu of those sources, citizen journalists expand their sources to broader range of non-officials and often go without human sources entirely (Reich, 2008). Although this is a means of obtaining greater source diversity—and bloggers have seen their distance from official sources of power as a mark of credibility (Wall, 2005)—reporting without a relationship with official sources is not a viable form of journalism within the professional journalistic paradigm.

Original Reporting

Another principal area of the journalistic paradigm violated by WikiLeaks concerns the work of journalism—the practices by which journalists process, reinforce, and attempt to establish the credibility of the information they present to the public. Newswork has primarily been conceived through the lens of the everyday routines that journalists use to gather information and classify stories (Molotch & Lester, 1974; Schudson, 1982; Tuchman, 1973). These routines help standardize the news while also communicating ideology by providing the gloss of a professional and systematic process that helps support journalists' cultural and epistemological authority (Eliasoph, 1988; Tuchman, 1972; Tuchman, 1978). Routines are the "cultural glue" that helps hold together mainstream journalists' common paradigm and interpretive framework (Berkowitz, 2000, p. 140).

But newswork goes deeper than routines into more specific epistemological practices that form the core of how journalists determine and present evidence for the "facticity" and legitimacy of their reports. As journalists themselves present it, those primary evidentiary practices fall under the umbrella of *reporting*, often called "boots-on-the-ground reporting" (Anderson, 2011), "shoe-leather reporting" (Pavlik, 2000), or, as I will call it here, "original reporting" (Anderson, 2011). On this concept, I build on the work of Anderson (2010, 2011, forthcoming), who has outlined the concept of original reporting, examined journalists' discourse surrounding it, and compared it to the work of online aggregation. Anderson characterizes original reporting as rotating around a "holy trinity" of news objects that constitute the forms of evidence most valued by journalists: observation, documents, and interviews (2010, p. 7). Observation is closely tied to the concept of eyewitnessing, in which physical presence confers authority to the journalist, both for the individual report itself and for the profession's legitimacy in the public's imagination (Zelizer, 2007). Documents have long held a particular evidentiary power in investigative journalism, helping give information weight by making it material (Anderson, 2010; Ettema & Glasser, 1998), though they are not used as often in actual practice as their professed value might indicate (Sigal, 1973). Indeed, as we will see in the WikiLeaks case, documents' evidentiary value to journalists has some sharp limits. Interviews' value are tied up in the authority derived from the reporter-source relationship, outlined in the previous point; they are considered a valid and reliable means of obtaining the facts or proper interpretation of a situation as determined by an official source (Schudson, 1995). Binding up all of these practices is the routinized form in which they are undertaken, embedding the practices in a historical, professional context that both draws boundaries for the approved practices of journalism (Sigal, 1973) and provides authority to persuade both readers and other journalists "that reporters have done all they can to reveal the truth" (Broersma, 2010, p. 28).

This concept of reporting holds a central place in paradigm of professional journalism as the core of professional newswork (Singer, 2003), and has become increasingly valorized within newsrooms as a way to invoke authority over other forms of newswork, particularly online aggregation (Anderson, forthcoming). Its importance within journalistic discourse—and the importance of its survival to democracy—have reached a taken-for-granted quality, to the point where it is rarely defined (Anderson, 2011). But the practice of "original reporting" is in fact deeply flawed. Each one of its "holy trinity" is an incomplete and vulnerable form of evidence: Eyewitnessing has been plagued with credibility concerns, particularly in journalism, where there are no standardized procedures (Mortensen, 2011; Zelizer, 2007); documents' materiality can lend them a misleading sense of objectivity (Anderson, 2010; Ettema & Glasser, 1998); and interviews are frequently used as a tool for official sources to co-opt routines for their ends (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1982; Ericson et al., 1989). Not only are the practices themselves fraught with difficulties, but they are practiced with declining frequency by journalists. Numerous studies have shown that because of the increased role of public relations and decreased resources among news organizations, much less of the newswork actually being practiced could be classified as "original reporting" (Franklin, 2011; Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008a, 2008b; Quandt, 2008). Much more of it is characterized by monitoring, imitation, and gathering readily available information (Boczkowski, 2010), to the point where "any meaningful independent journalistic activity by the media is the exception rather than the rule" (Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008a, p. 17).

The concept of "original reporting" has been a particular point of contention in the rhetorical encounters between professional journalism and its networked counterpart, which relies on information collected from diffused networks rather than gathered through the work of individual journalists (Anderson, 2011; Beckett & Ball, 2012). Professional journalists often hold original reporting up as a superior form of newswork to online aggregation, one that separates professionals from amateurs and parasites (Anderson, 2011, forthcoming; Fenton & Witschge, 2010). Indeed, when non-professionals have attempted to practice journalism according to these professional tenets of "original reporting," they have often encountered difficulties, owing to their lack of training and institutional resources (Reich, 2008; Reich & Lahav, 2011). But after being defined in their earlier days by their lack of reporting (Halavais, 2002; Singer, 2003), more web-native forms of newswork, such as aggregation and blogging, are converging with professional newswork, with both practices involving pulling together facts, quotations, documents, analysis, and narrative (Anderson, 2011, p. 22; Rosenberg, 2009). Though the rhetorical gap between original reporting and the networked forms of newswork are great, the lines distinguishing the two in practice are blurry at best.

Objectivity

Objectivity is perhaps the most well-established element of the modern professional journalistic paradigm. It has formed the foundation of numerous studies on paradigm repair and boundary work (Bennett, Gressett, & Haltom, 1985; Berkowitz, 2000; Bishop, 1999; Cecil, 2002; Hackett, 1984; Reese, 1990), and has been posited as the fundamental value of the repair process itself (Berkowitz, 2000; Meyers, 2011). Objectivity plays a central role in American professional journalism: Scholars have described it the profession's "chief occupational value" (Schudson, 2001, p. 149) and "supreme deity" (Mindich, 1998, p. 1). Like "original reporting," it has taken on a self-evident quality within the profession, becoming synonymous with "good journalism" itself (Carpentier & Trioen, 2010). Within that paradigm, the idea of objectivity holds that reporting should consist only of facts, unadorned by opinion or bias, and where facts cannot be obtained, truth can be most nearly discerned by portraying conflicting claims with equal weight (Schudson, 2001). It is thus rooted in a positivist epistemology, with an assumption that reality rests on knowable facts that can be conveyed by journalists (Hackett, 1984, 2008). Within this concept, journalists' role is to serve as neutral transmitters of this opinion-free—or at least opinion-balanced—social reality, using such techniques as detachment, balance of competing truth claims, staying out of the story, and not interpreting it from an ideological perspective (Bennett et al., 1985; Hackett, 1984; Mindich, 1998; Reese, 1990).

Objectivity functions to reinforce professional journalism's social authority by asserting its autonomy and establishing its jurisdiction to control knowledge (Broersma, 2010; Schudson, 2001; Schudson & Anderson, 2008). In actuality, then, objectivity in the American sense is a "strategic ritual" (Tuchman, 1972), a routinized reporting form meant to shield journalists from accusations of bias in order to maintain its legitimacy as an information collector and disseminator (Schudson & Anderson, 2008). The value of objectivity has thus been regarded—at times by journalists themselves—as an impossible ideal (Carpentier & Trioen, 2010; Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 1978): News media unavoidably represent events "in ways which are not pregiven in the events themselves," whether by prioritizing or deprioritizing actors and events, making reporting decisions based on culturally bound values, or being bound by language that cannot accurately transmit reality (Hackett, 1984, p. 234). Far from true objectivity, news coverage is in fact often supportive of existing authorities by uncritically examining the systems of power (Schudson 1978, 2001).

This journalistic concept of strategic objectivity should not be confused with the more scientifically oriented concept of objectivity, which consists of testing hypotheses and claims through empirical processes, then using the results to form conclusions (Boudana, 2011; Ryan, 2009). While that form of objectivity can be found in journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), it is quite different from the one being explored here: The strategic ritual of objectivity is designed not to ascertain truth as the scientific process is, but to preserve authority. In fact, the strategic form of objectivity is a barrier to the scientific form (Boudana, 2011).

Objectivity is not the dominant value in networked journalism that it is in professional journalism. Instead, the online journalistic forms that have laid the foundation for networked journalism, such as blogs and multimedia, have been marked by passionate partisanship, personal expression, and inclusivity, as opposed to detachment (Deuze, 2005; Wall, 2005). More recently, transparency has emerged as an alternative journalistic value to objectivity (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Karlsson, 2010). journalists' response to this difference in online contexts has been conflicted; at times, they have portrayed forms of online journalism as unobjective and therefore not credible news sources (Bishop, 2004; Ruggiero, 2004), but they have also showed signs of opening up their objectivity norms to conform to the prevailing norms on the web, such as in their use of Twitter (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2011). The negotiation over the value of objectivity and the proper ways to practice it are in a particular state of flux, as professional and networked journalism jockey for discursive space.

Forming the Paradigm

Each of these four elements—institutionality, reporter-source relationships, original reporting, and objectivity—is embedded and intertwined with the others to form the paradigmatic canopy under which American journalism operates. Together, they reinforce one another's authority and constitute the foundation from which each of the others is practiced. Of these four elements, institutionality and objectivity play more fundamental, influencing roles, while original reporting and reporter-source relationships are more secondary, products of the influence of the previous two elements. News organizations' institutional heft and concomitant social power help dictate the parameters of reporter-source relationships, and those relationships become so bound up in institutional meaning that they can at times become proxies for institutional interaction (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Berkowitz & TerKeurst, 1999; Davis, 2009). Likewise, objectivity directs journalists to official sources, identifying them as the authoritative sources of knowledge in a social area, and that resulting relationship undergirds the continued legitimacy of objectivity as a paradigm (Bennett, 2004; Carlson, 2009; Ericson et al., 1989). Reporter-source relationships are closely related to original reporting—while original reporting addresses the work of journalism, reporter-source relationships refers to the dynamic interactions that occur in one area of that work. The latter takes on an outsized importance as journalists rely largely on official sources for information, practicing a journalism of attribution rather than a journalism of independent verification (Carlson, 2009)—though the journalists themselves would consider such work part of original reporting. Original reporting also grounds and is grounded in objectivity. The routines that constitute it assure objective reporting practice, and objectivity is cited as the justification for journalism to maintain jurisdiction over reporting practices (Schudson & Anderson, 2008).

This study is an effort to map the professional paradigm of American journalism as it encounters a distinctive practitioner of networked journalism; to that end, this paradigmatic description has focused on American journalism in particular. But this study also includes one of the foremost institutions in British journalism—the *Guardian*, which worked closely with WikiLeaks over about six months—in an effort to help triangulate the American journalistic paradigm by highlighting similarities and departures between the two groups' paradigmatic discourse. The British journalistic paradigm shares some fundamental elements with its American counterpart, but the two diverge in important ways. British professional journalism has shown similar institutional and organizational characteristics to the American news media (Aldridge, 1998; Barnett & Gaber, 2001), and no differences have yet been noted in their conceptions of original reporting.

The most significant divergence between the two paradigms is in objectivity. Schudson (2001) traced its rise within an exclusively American context, placing British journalism halfway between American objectivity and Europe's interpretive tradition and describing it as fact-oriented but not fully objectivist. Likewise, Hampton (2008) found that while Reuters and the BBC had adopted an American-style objectivity, most of professional British journalism emphasized editorial independence and fairness instead of objectivity—qualities that were compatible with partisanship. When surveyed, British journalists have expressed an approach to the issue that places them within the same paradigm as their fellow Western Europeans, rather than Americans (Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Donsbach, 1995). It is this interpretive paradigm from which the *Guardian* operates, as it aims to become "the world's leading liberal voice" ("The world's leading liberal voice," 2009). Another importance difference is in the relationship between journalists and government officials. The British relationship is generally characterized with more conflict and tension, though elements of mutual dependence and shared culture are evident in both countries (Barnett & Gaber, 2001; Deacon, 2004; McNair, 2004; Schlesinger, 2006).

Each element of this paradigm encountered a unique challenge during 2010 and 2011 in the form of WikiLeaks, which both collaborated with professional media organizations in groundbreaking ways and simultaneously violated each one of these paradigmatic elements in virtually every dimension of its existence: structure, organizing values, information gathering, information dissemination, and relationships to governments and media. The following chapter will take a closer look at WikiLeaks as an anomalous case, examining each of these dimensions and the ways in which WikiLeaks violated the professional journalistic paradigm through them.

Chapter 2: WikiLeaks as Anomalous Case

In determining the paradigmatic qualities of American professional journalism vis-à-vis networked forms of journalism, this study examines the case of WikiLeaks as an emblematic example of the encounter between those two spheres. This chapter outlines the details of WikiLeaks as a particular case. In doing so, I will first detail WikiLeaks' history, then describe its structure and funding, and its relationships with professional media organizations and governments. I will close with a brief outline of the ways in which WikiLeaks violates the professional journalistic paradigm and presents an anomalous case, as well as an argument for the value of studying WikiLeaks as a case.

WikiLeaks is an internationally based nonprofit group dedicated to leaking sensitive documents. The group was founded in 2006 with a global group of hackers and transparency activists led by Julian Assange, an Australian former hacker. Assange, who turned 40 in 2011, spent the late 1980s and 1990s as a hacker, breaking into corporate and government mainframes and websites under the pseudonym Mendax. Assange had gained a degree of prominence among the Australian hacking community, particularly in Melbourne, where he was both a co-author of and subject of a book on the international hacking world, *Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness & Obsession on the Electronic Frontier*. Assange's time as a hacker effectively ended in 1996, when he was convicted of 24 counts of hacking and fined in Australian court in 1996, though he never served any time in prison (Leigh & Harding, 2011). He spent the next decade running a security consulting site, attending college, and developing several open-source software programs, including a deniable encryption system that would allow human rights activists who were being interrogated to give a password to a minimal amount of information, while the bulk of the information would remain encrypted (Leigh & Harding, 2011).

Assange's idea for WikiLeaks originated as far back as 1999 but did not begin to take substantive shape until early 2006 (Burns & Somaiya, 2011; Leigh & Harding, 2011). Assange registered the WikiLeaks.org domain name in October 2006 (Beckett & Ball, 2012), and, before the site went live, the group published its first documents later that year: a copy of a decision by Somali rebel leaders to assassinate leaders of the Somali government, which was posted along with a 17-page analysis of its meaning (Aftergood, 2007). The group's second significant publication also pertained to Africa; a report on extensive corruption by former Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi that had been commissioned but never released by his successor received front-page play in the *Guardian* (Leigh & Harding, 2011).

Later that year, WikiLeaks began to post its first documents related to the United States, including a list of U.S. military equipment in Iraq and a guide to dealing with military detainees. The most prominent of those early leaks was a 238-page 2004 Standard Operating Procedures guide to the Guantánamo Bay naval base's Camp Delta prison: Military officials called the document out of date but did not dispute its authenticity (Gilson, 2007b; MacAskill, 2007). The group received its first significant resistance from government and corporate officials early in 2008, after it published documents pertaining to possible money laundering and tax evasion through the Cayman Islands account of the Swiss bank Julius Baer and Trust. The bank filed suit, and a U.S. federal judge ordered WikiLeaks' domain name registrar to block its web address. The case quickly drew the support of Internet free speech advocates such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and the judge reversed the order after two weeks (Glater, 2008; Liptak & Stone, 2008).

During 2008 and 2009, the scope of WikiLeaks' publications began to broaden, both in topic and in impact. The group moved deeper into leaks revealing government corruption and inner workings, publishing documents revealing that U.S. forces were permitted to pursue former members of Saddam Hussein's regime into Iran and Syria during the Iraq War (Schmitt & Gordon, 2008), an early draft of an international treaty targeting copyright violation (Masnick, 2008), and a series of documents on the details and financing of post-election violence in Kenya (Domscheit-Berg, 2011). This publicly oriented work earned WikiLeaks several accolades, including Amnesty International's New Media award and a Freedom of Expression award from the British magazine *Index of Censorship* (Benkler, 2011). At the same time, it also exposed more secrets from the private sector, including handbooks from the Church of Scientology, an application developer agreement for Apple's iPhone, emails from former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's private account, emails from East Anglia University scientists that spurred the so-called "Climategate" debate, and numerous fraternity rituals (Claburn, 2008; Domscheit-Berg, 2011; McCullagh, 2009; Schor, 2008).

In 2010, WikiLeaks returned to its previous focus on governments, this time centering on the United States. The group released just six sets of documents throughout the year. Two of them were relatively minor: a 2008 U.S. Department of Defense report on WikiLeaks itself, and internal city documents regarding a stampede at a German parade (Strom, 2010; "WikiLeaks releases documents," 2010). But the other four were of unprecedented scope, both for WikiLeaks and, increasingly, for the world's intelligence community. First, WikiLeaks released a 2007 video of an American helicopter shooting at and killing a group of Iraqi civilians that included a Reuters photographer and driver. The video, released in both full 38-minute and edited 17-minute versions, was titled "Collateral Murder" and published on a dedicated site, collateralmurder.com — WikiLeaks' most concerted and advocative presentation of a leak to that point (Cohen &

Stelter, 2010). The video remains an anomaly within WikiLeaks' publications for its extensive packaging and contextualization (Beckett & Ball, 2012).

The second leak was exponentially larger than anything WikiLeaks had previously published: a trove of U.S. military documents detailing the war in Afghanistan. The cache included about 92,000 documents, of which 77,000 were published in July 2010. The remainder were held back for further redaction of informants who might be in danger of retribution; it is unclear whether those 15,000 have been subsequently published by WikiLeaks ("Afghan War Diary," 2010). The documents revealed a bleaker picture of the war than official accounts had indicated, including substantial aid for Afghan insurgents from Pakistan and the use of heat-seeking missiles against allied aircraft by the Taliban (Chivers et al., 2010). The third leak, published in October 2010, was similar to the second—a set of 391,000 U.S. military documents from the Iraq War, which, when cross-checked by the nonprofit group Iraq Body Count, revealed 15,000 more civilian deaths than had previously been estimated (Leigh & Harding, 2011). As will be discussed later in this chapter, WikiLeaks collaborated with several news organizations for the first time with the two leaks, working with the U.S.' *New York Times*, Britain's *Guardian*, and Germany's *Der Spiegel* for the Afghan leak and adding France's *Le Monde*, the Qatari television network Al Jazeera, and the British nonprofit Bureau of Investigative journalism (Oldroyd, 2010).

The fourth leak was the largest in history—a set of 251,000 U.S. diplomatic cables, of which only 220 were initially released in November 2010. WikiLeaks gradually released several thousand others before the entire set of documents was inadvertently released online during the summer of 2011 and formally published by WikiLeaks in September 2011 (Gunter, 2011). The cables contained a vast array of diplomatic revelations pertaining to virtually every country in the world, including terrorism funding by Saudi Arabia; systemic corruption in Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere; and directives to U.S. diplomats at the United Nations to spy on others there (Mitchell, 2011). This time, the leak was done in concert with the *Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, and Spain's *El País*, excluding the *Times*, which received the information from the *Guardian* (Leigh, 2010).

Shortly after that diplomatic cables leak, Assange turned himself in to British police on Swedish accusations of rape and molestation stemming from an encounter with two Swedish women in the summer of 2010 (Burns & Somaiya, 2010b). He was granted bail a week later and remained under house arrest in Britain as of February 2012. He has spent much of the last year and a half fighting his extradition to Sweden; two lower judges have ruled in favor of extradition, and he has appealed the case to the British Supreme Court (Owen, 2012). WikiLeaks, meanwhile, has continued to operate despite Assange's incarceration, though at a slower pace. In addition to its release of the remainder of the diplomatic cables, it made two leaks in 2011: a set of files related to detainees at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and a set of files from international intelligence contractors it dubbed "The Spy Files." The Guantánamo files were released in April 2011 with eight mostly new media partners, which did not include the *New York Times* or *Guardian*, though both papers gained access to the files indirectly (Stelter & Cohen, 2011). The Spy Files were released in November 2011 in conjunction with the Bureau of Investigative journalism and the London human rights group Privacy International (Chatterjee, 2011).

WIKILEAKS' STRUCTURE AND FUNDING

WikiLeaks consists of a loose conglomerate of global activists without a stable organizational structure or formal headquarters. The group's Twitter profile lists its location as "Everywhere," and it has operated at various *Times* out of Iceland, Britain, Germany, and Sweden, among other places (Domscheit-Berg, 2011). Rosen (2010) has described it as "the world's first stateless news organization" (para. 14). Unlike all other news organizations, WikiLeaks is not organized under the laws of a particular nation but "under the logic of the Internet itself" (Rosen, 2011). This has given the organization the ability to protect its anonymous sources and stay beyond the reach of governments attempting to end its operations (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Fisher & Cohen, 2010; Leigh & Franklin, 2008).

Likewise, the group's structure is deliberately amorphous. Assange has been, by all accounts, the central figure in the group since its inception, though he has not referred to himself by a consistent title. The number of people reported to be involved with the organization has ranged widely, but various accounts have estimated the group at about a half-dozen members who could be considered "full-time," along with several dozen core volunteers, and several hundred others who are more tangentially involved (Burns & Somaiya, 2010a; Cohen & Stelter, 2010; Domscheit-Berg, 2011; Khatchadourian, 2010). The group lists an advisory board on its site, though several of its members were reported in 2010 to be unaware that they were on it; Assange called the board at the time "pretty informal" (Kushner, 2010, para. 19).

The site was originally intended to function as a wiki, allowing a large, distributed group of users to collaboratively upload, review, and disseminate leaked documents, though to avoid censorship, it would not be openly editable like most wikis (Gilson, 2007a). Beginning in 2008, however, that model was scrapped in favor of releasing documents to journalists and publicly releasing them in conjunction with those journalists' published reports based on the leaks (Singel, 2008a). Alongside many of its major leaks, WikiLeaks has released analyses of the information being published. In the case of its Collateral Murder video, the group sent two Icelandic members to Iraq to talk to eyewitnesses and conduct background research (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Domscheit-Berg, 2011).

WikiLeaks' funding sources and mechanisms have also been fluid. When the means of the groups funding were made broadly public for the first time by the *Wall Street Journal* in mid-2010, most of WikiLeaks' funds were funneled through the Wau Holland Foundation, a German group named after a legendary hacker. WikiLeaks opened an account at the foundation in 2009 (Domscheit-Berg, 2011) and received funds from the account through a convoluted process in which other foundations would aggregate its bills and submit them to the foundation, which would then disperse the funds to WikiLeaks strictly in exchange for aggregated receipts. This method was used in order to keep WikiLeaks' donors and the companies with which it worked hidden from potential retribution. Assange also claimed that WikiLeaks was registered as a library in Australia and a foundation in France, and had two 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations that acted as a front for the website (Whalen & Crawford, 2010). In 2010, WikiLeaks collected $1.8 million through Wau Holland and spent about $550,000 of it (Burns, 2011), with most of the money coming from Germany (Domscheit-Berg, 2011).

WikiLeaks also collected money through the online money-transferring service PayPal. WikiLeaks' PayPal account was frozen for about three months in 2009 (Domscheit-Berg, 2011), then shut down permanently in December 2010, in response to the release of the diplomatic cables (Burns, 2010). Other financial institutions such as Visa, Mastercard, and Western Union also refused to process donations to WikiLeaks, and in late 2011, the group temporarily suspended many of its operations because the blocks had cut off 95 percent of its funding, according to Assange (Burns, 2011). WikiLeaks has also opened accounts with the British money-transfer service

Moneybookers and the Swedish micropayment system Flattr, though its account with the former was shut down in mid-2010 (Butcher, 2010; Domscheit-Berg, 2011). It twice applied for a grant of about $500,000 from the Knight Foundation's Knight News Challenge but was denied (Domscheit-Berg, 2011).

WikiLeaks is not reported to have paid any formal salaries before 2010. According to Domscheit-Berg (2011), much of its primary members' meager living expenses were paid for informally by others. By the end of 2010, however, a handful of WikiLeaks' members were drawing salaries (Burns & Somaiya, 2011), and Wau Holland's figures indicated that WikiLeaks paid out total salaries of about €100,000 per year, of which €66,000 went to Assange (Leigh & Harding, 2011). It is unclear how WikiLeaks spent the $1.3 million surplus it had at the end of 2010, though Assange and WikiLeaks have maintained they have not used WikiLeaks' money to fight Assange's sexual assault case (Burns, 2011).

WIKILEAKS AND THE MEDIA

WikiLeaks' relationship with the professional media has always been an uneasy one, even more so since mid-2010, when it began positioning itself more closely to professional news organizations, both rhetorically and collaboratively. WikiLeaks had no substantive relationship with the mainstream news media before early 2010. It did not collaborate with any news organizations, and, with the prominent exception of numerous pieces including one long feature in the *Guardian*, it was not covered in any substantive way by major mainstream news organizations. Its first formal attempt to reach out to those organizations came in 2008, when it attempted to auction off exclusive initial publication rights of the emails of a top assistant to Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez; no bids came in (Domscheit-Berg, 2008). In explaining the plan, Assange articulated a strategy that would guide WikiLeaks' decisions to collaborate with media organizations on major leaks in 2010 and 2011. When WikiLeaks offered its information to everyone in unlimited supply, news organizations were unwilling to devote the resources to analyze or report on it without additional incentives. News organizations would show more interest, Assange reasoned, when given exclusive access to a story—a "scoop"— in return (Singel, 2008b).

This was the philosophy that led WikiLeaks to collaborate with mainstream news organizations beginning in early 2010. The group began the shift by making a significant move toward traditional journalistic behavior with the Collateral Murder video, though without any collaborative relationships. (Though not for lack of trying—Assange met with the *Guardian*'s investigations editor, David Leigh, but was unable to reach a deal with him [Leigh & Harding, 2011].) In addition to the two members WikiLeaks sent to Iraq to do background reporting on the video, the group also edited the raw footage into a 17-minute video, held a press conference and put the story on a dedicated site with a set of still images and a timeline (Hodge, 2010).

WikiLeaks' first successful collaboration with a mainstream news organization, however, was initiated by the news organization, not Assange. Nick Davies, one of the *Guardian*'s most prominent investigative reporters, made the first contact between the paper and WikiLeaks regarding a potential partnership, emailing Assange in June 2010 after reading that U.S. army private Bradley Manning had allegedly leaked hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks (Leigh & Harding, 2011). Though the paper had written on WikiLeaks with some regularity and Assange had previously met with Leigh, the group had no substantial relationship with the *Guardian* before that time. Assange had written to the *Guardian*'s editor, Alan Rusbridger, several times throughout

WikiLeaks' first years, urging him to pick up WikiLeaks' stories, though Rusbridger had never taken him up on an offer (Leigh & Harding, 2011).

Davies eventually caught up with Assange and other WikiLeaks representatives in Brussels and reached an agreement with them to give his paper time to preview the Afghan War documents and write a series of stories on them to coincide with WikiLeaks' publication (Leigh & Harding, 2011). He and another *Guardian* reporter suggested bringing in the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*, in large part, to help shield the *Guardian* from the possibility of an injunction. Both publications agreed, and Assange and reporters from the three organizations spent several weeks holed up at the *Guardian*'s offices poring through the documents (Keller, 2011a; Leigh & Harding, 2011). A largely similar process was followed four months later for the Iraq War documents, and *Le Monde*, Al Jazeera and the Bureau of Investigative journalism were added to WikiLeaks' partners, though *Le Monde* and Al Jazeera did not collaborate with the others in perusing the documents. The Bureau and Al Jazeera in particular upset its original collaborators; the Bureau's plans to produce a documentary on WikiLeaks led Assange to delay publication and one of its journalists let plans of the publication slip, while Al Jazeera broke the news organizations' agreed-upon embargo by about an hour (Leigh & Harding, 2011).

WikiLeaks' relationship with news organizations began to fray beyond repair shortly after the publication of the Iraq War documents, following the *New York Times*' publication of an article that described Assange as a dictatorial leader and WikiLeaks as an organization on the verge of collapse (Burns & Somaiya, 2010a). Assange had also been upset by the *Times*' refusal to link to WikiLeaks' publication of the Afghan War documents, and after the *Times*' critical story, Assange cut the paper out of the group of news organizations with which it shared its diplomatic cables (Keller, 2011a). The *Times* received the cables from the *Guardian*; according to the *Guardian*, this infuriated Assange, leading him to threaten to sue the *Guardian* and cut off their access as well (Leigh & Harding, 2011). This time, WikiLeaks followed the news organizations' lead in determining what cables to publish, initially releasing just 220 (Shane & Lehren, 2010).

Though it resulted in an agreement for the diplomatic cables, the meeting at which Assange threatened to sue the *Guardian* turned out to be a significant event in the deterioration of WikiLeaks' relationship with the paper. The *Guardian*'s Davies had been angry with WikiLeaks' decision to give the Afghan War documents to the British TV network Channel 4 just before their publication in July (Leigh & Harding, 2011), and by February 2011 the paper was referring to itself as one of WikiLeaks' "former collaborators" (P. Walker, 2011, para. 4).The animosity between the groups reached its high point in September 2011, after the diplomatic cables had been published in various places online. The *Guardian* had published the password to the encrypted cables file earlier that year in its book on WikiLeaks (Harding & Leigh, p. 139), and within a few months, web users began applying it to the file, which WikiLeaks supporters had made publicly available on the file-sharing site BitTorrent (Stöcker, 2011). Each side responded by blaming the other—WikiLeaks threatening a lawsuit for violation of confidentiality, and the *Guardian* saying its publication of the password was not a security compromise and that it was told the password was temporary (Gunter, 2011).

Though WikiLeaks has worked with several other mainstream news organizations, including the *Washington Post* and McClatchy Newspapers, its relationships with organizations beyond the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* have not been widely documented. Neither have its relationships with alternative media organizations, with a few exceptions. Notably, it engaged with a brief spat with the liberal magazine *Mother Jones* in early 2010. The conflict began with the publication of a freelance article that took a critical view of Assange and WikiLeaks; Assange responded by posting in the article's comment section to accuse the piece of factual errors and "gutter journalism insinuations" (Assange, 2010a). *Mother Jones*' editor accused Assange of rigging the comment system to give the comment a statistically impossible number of reader recommendations, and the two soon engaged in an angry confrontation at a journalism conference, with *Mother Jones* gleefully calling the conflict a "smackdown" (Gilson, 2010a; Gilson, 2010b).

As a whole, WikiLeaks' encounters with mainstream news organizations—usually mediated through Assange—have been marked on both sides by deep distrust and slights, both perceived and real, borne out of competitiveness and personal pride. Both the relationships with the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* began with profound skepticism on Assange's part, a phenomenon also experienced by more sympathetic contacts such as blogger and open government advocate Micah Sifry (2011a). And both relationships ended with testy meetings, followed by public denunciations of the other party. At first glance, the conflicts appear remarkably superficial and personal, but through a closer examination, I will argue that they are motivated by deeper, more fundamental contradictions.

WikiLeaks and Government

WikiLeaks' relationship with government is far more universally antagonistic than its encounters with professional media, yet it, too, is not without some nuance. The philosophy behind WikiLeaks' founding has been widely reported to be rooted in a belief of the illegitimacy of government secrets in particular and government power in general, and Assange's own writings appear to support that. In a pair of online essays written around the time of the group's founding, Assange referred to authoritarian governments as conspiracies, "working in collaborative secrecy to the detriment of the people" (Assange, 2006b, para. 6). In this context, WikiLeaks' aim was to make leaking government information easier and more widespread than ever, so that this government conspiracy would become so fearful of itself that it could no longer conspire (Assange, 2006a, 2006b; Bady, 2010; Khatchadourian, 2010).

In many senses, WikiLeaks has had no relationship at all with governments for much of its existence. As a stateless news organization, it is not organized under the auspices of any particular governmental body (Rosen, 2010, 2011), and its actual interactions with governments have been rare. The behavior between WikiLeaks and governments has taken the form of a cat-and-mouse pattern, without any direct interaction. WikiLeaks comes into possession of or publishes a set of government documents; government officials publicly denounce WikiLeaks' behavior and urge it to cease; WikiLeaks publicly refuses the demands with a mocking or defiant tone; the government publicly reaffirms its desire to apprehend WikiLeaks' principals; and WikiLeaks takes new steps to avoid apprehension. This process is nearly always carried out through media outlets, and it has most often taken place with the American government.

The U.S. government has formally regarded WikiLeaks as a threat since shortly after it was launched; spurred by WikiLeaks' 2007 release of Army documents and the Guantánamo Bay prison manual, the Pentagon produced a report in 2008 that declared the group a threat to Army information security (Strom, 2010). During WikiLeaks' early years, other governments took more drastic, though temporary actions. The Australian government took WikiLeaks offline after it posted a list of banned sites there (Luft, 2009a), and the British Ministry of Defence blocked it after it published military manuals

(Leigh, 2009). WikiLeaks was also briefly shut down by a U.S. federal judge in early 2008, though the decision was quickly reversed (Glater, 2008).

The U.S. government did not vocally condemn WikiLeaks itself after its publication of the Collateral Murder video—another news organization, Reuters, had, after all, also tried to gain access to it through the Freedom of Information Act. It began its publicly antagonistic rhetoric quietly in June 2010, following the arrest of Bradley Manning, with not-for-attribution statements expressing concern at the possible leak of the diplomatic cables and a desire for Assange's "cooperation" (Shenon, 2010). The rhetoric sharply escalated once the Afghan War documents were published the following month, with concern turning to condemnation. That disapproval centered on WikiLeaks' decision not to redact the names of local allied informants to prevent possible reprisal and was characterized by a statement by Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that WikiLeaks "might already have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family" (Savage, 2010a, para. 12).

In actuality, however, WikiLeaks had asked the government for assistance in identifying possible redactions. The two parties communicated through the *New York Times*. After the government gave the *Times* a request for WikiLeaks to redact the documents, Assange sent back a reply through the *Times* asking for help in doing so, which the government rejected and later denied receiving (Greenwald, 2010e). A similar process occurred before the publication of the diplomatic cables four months later, though without the *Times*' involvement. Assange sent a request for redaction help to the U.S. government, was denied, and this time sent a reply stating that WikiLeaks did not intend to put anyone at risk, "nor do we wish to harm the national security of the United States" (Leigh & Harding 2011, p. 193). It was perhaps the most sympathetic statement Assange or WikiLeaks ever made toward the U.S. government.

The U.S. government repeated its accusatory rhetoric after the publication of both the Iraq War documents and diplomatic cables, attempting to maintain a delicate balance between condemning WikiLeaks' revelations as dangerous and threatening to the world's stability while at the same time downplaying their importance as a window into the machinations of American foreign policy. Meanwhile, it quietly acknowledged that it had no evidence of the war documents leading to anyone's death (Youssef, 2010) and that the diplomatic consequences of the cable leak were modest (Leigh & Harding, 2011; Memmott, 2010).

Republican officials and politicians, without the need to maintain that balance, were far more scathing in their language toward WikiLeaks. Top Republican congressman Peter King called for WikiLeaks to be designated a terrorist organization (M. O'Brien, 2010), and 2012 Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich said Assange should be considered an enemy combatant (Kleefeld, 2010), while former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin urged the government to pursue Assange as it had the terrorist group Al Qaeda (Grier, 2010).

WikiLeaks also faced denouncement from leaders of other nations, particularly for its publication of the diplomatic cables, though that rhetoric was less strident and less sustained than the United States' ("Key reaction," 2010; Rusbridger, 2011). In a few cases, leaders even voiced their support for WikiLeaks (Fick, 2010; Harding, 2010). Though WikiLeaks and Assange held an abiding skepticism for governments in general—particularly more authoritarian regimes like China—most of the hostility between it and governments manifested itself with the United States.

WHY STUDY WIKILEAKS?

It has been widely argued over the past decade that traditional, professional media are facing a profound challenge from a networked form of media production that is built on an ethic of collaboration, amateurism, openness, niche interests, and widespread access to the tools of publishing and distribution—an ethic that directly contradicts the traditional media principles of professionalism, institutionalism, one-way communication, and narrow access to the tools needed to publish to a mass audience (e.g., Benkler, 2006; Bowman & Willis, 2003; Gillmor, 2004; Shirky, 2008). Traditional news organizations' encounters with this nascent media model have been fraught with conflict, skepticism, and misunderstanding (Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Singer, 2003), but in some cases have also included significant steps toward adoption, collaboration, and incorporation (Hermida, 2009; Singer et al., 2011). The interaction between these two journalistic models and mindsets, and particularly how they shape one another's values, norms, and practices, will play a significant role in defining the contours of journalism and news media as they move deeper into the networked era.

As Benkler (2011) effectively argues, WikiLeaks embodies virtually all of the characteristics of this emerging model of media and journalism—what Benkler terms "the networked fourth estate." Like many of the other blogs and nonprofits that make up this sphere, it is focused on enabling transparency by unearthing direct evidence of government behavior in order to allow a networked base of experts to analyze it and subject it to public criticism (Benkler, 2011, p. 55; Sifry, 2011a). Like many of the web's most significant initiatives going back to its early days, it consists a decentralized, global network of contributors outside of a strictly institutional framework (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Benkler, 2011; Rosen, 2011). And like public affairs blogs and other online news organizations, it openly proclaims a point of view, publishing information and commentary toward an expressed political aim of challenging secrecy and promoting social justice (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Benkler, 2011; Wall, 2005).

WikiLeaks violates each of the elements of the professional journalistic paradigm discussed in the previous chapter. First, it defies institutional characterization with its fluidity, both geographically and organizationally. It has no physical headquarters, and Assange spent most of 2010 without a permanent residence. Neither its membership nor organizational structure has an established form, being constituted instead by a loose, internationally diffused and continually changing collection of activists and collaborators. Likewise, its funding has come through a variety of non-institutional channels—and those funding institutions it has worked with have invariably cut off its access at one point or another. It even challenges alternative forms of media institutionality, lacking a board of directors, many of the formal structures that go with nonprofit ownership, and accountability structures such as annual reports (Beckett & Ball, 2012).

Additionally, WikiLeaks engages in few, if any, of the source relationships and routines that traditional journalists use to validate original reporting and define themselves. It has almost no relationship with the official sources with which mainstream journalists share a culture. Instead, U.S. government officials from both parties have repeatedly condemned its actions, and major corporations—particularly financial ones—have denounced it as well. (Bradley Manning, the person believed to have been the source of WikiLeaks' major leaks, was not a well-placed government source, but a low-level Army private.) Beyond that, its leaks have challenged the "settlement of power between media and politicians as a mutually responsible process" (Beckett & Ball, 2012, p. 9). Likewise, it operates outside the legal and political structures of any country, which both professional and alternative news organizations have almost universally operated under (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Rosen, 2011).

WikiLeaks' engagement in the practices of "original reporting" is a much less clear paradigmatic challenge. Like journalists, WikiLeaks places a heavy faith in the role of documents in journalistic veracity, and it also sent members to perform "boots on the ground" reporting on at least one significant occasion. Yet here, too, WikiLeaks had no reporting beats or interviews with officials, spent no time navigating the bureaucratic systems of government, and had not witnessed the events about which they released documents. Its editorial and verification process is an ad hoc one, lacking many of the checks and balances and routinized processes that constitute the reporting and editing of information in professional news organizations (Beckett & Ball, 2012).

And finally, contrary to the norm of objectivity, WikiLeaks and Assange have expressed explicit political goals through their leaks; not simply government transparency—a goal that many journalists affirm as compatible with an objectivist viewpoint—but exposing wrongdoing by the U.S. and other governments, and even undermining the authority of government itself (Assange, 2006; Bady, 2010; Cohen & Stelter, 2010; Khatchadourian, 2010). Interestingly, Assange himself claimed to adhere to a scientific form of objectivity, declaring that "journalism should be more like science" and that "as far as possible, facts should be verifiable" (Moss, 2010, para. 3). Yet as I noted in the previous chapter, this form of objectivity in which facts are verified through an objective process in order to draw conclusions shares some of the same philosophical roots with its journalistic counterpart, but is at many points incompatible with the journalistic practice of objectivity as strategic ritual.

Yet despite this deviance from the professional journalistic paradigm, WikiLeaks' core activities—gaining access to closely guarded information about important issues in the public interest, then publishing it—have traditionally been thought of as journalistic in nature (Benkler, 2011; Greenslade, 2010a). This presents traditional journalists with a potentially problematic anomaly, one that performs what they have long perceived as a core duty of their profession, but one that also flouts several important aspects of their professional paradigm in the process.

Not only does WikiLeaks embody all of these paradigm-violating characteristics of networked journalism, but it has also been one of the most prominent organizations to do so thus far. WikiLeaks was one of the most intensely covered topics in the United States in late 2010, both in online and traditional news media (Jurkowitz, 2010; "WikiLeaks prove wickedly popular," 2010). The attention was deserved; by orchestrating the three largest leaks in modern intelligence history, WikiLeaks published a wealth of information that traditional media sources valued highly, but had been unable to directly uncover themselves. Clay Shirky's claim that WikiLeaks "has had more scoops in 3 years than *The Washington Post* has had in 30" (2010) is surely hyperbolic, but it underscores the value and magnitude of the information WikiLeaks published, even within the institutions it threatened.

WikiLeaks is not a perfectly representative embodiment of the networked fourth estate, nor should it be analyzed as such. In many of the aforementioned characteristics in which WikiLeaks embodies the values of networked journalism, it also manifests those qualities to an extreme degree. It is more decentralized and organizationally amorphous than many of its fellow journalistically oriented networked groups, such as Ushahidi and Spot.Us (though not to the degree of other web-based groups like Anonymous), and further onto the edges of the political/ideological spectrum than many of those groups as well. Like any group, WikiLeaks occupies a particular political and ideological location—in its case, one distinctively influenced by the principles of hacking culture of the 1980s and 1990s and a strong strain of anti-authoritarianism, with elements of anarchism (Assange, 2006a, 2006b; Arthur, 2010; Bady, 2010; Leigh & Harding, 2011). And like any group's ideological location, WikiLeaks' cannot be used to generalize to an extraordinarily broad-based phenomenon with diverse backgrounds, motivations, values, and practices.

Nevertheless, WikiLeaks presents an especially rich case for study of the interaction between the traditional and networked journalistic spheres because it interacted in such a direct, extended, and nuanced way with traditional media organizations, eliciting an exceptionally voluminous and textured corpus of discourse from within both spheres. It is for this reason, in addition to those articulated above, that this study centers on WikiLeaks in particular.

The responses of the professional news media to WikiLeaks were especially rich, conflicted, and illustrative. Through the processes of boundary work and paradigm repair, those news organizations used WikiLeaks as an important symbolic battleground upon which to defend the values of institutionality, reporter-source relationships, original reporting, and objectivity. By distancing themselves from WikiLeaks in those areas, they sought to publicly define their journalistic practices in opposition to WikiLeaks' networked characteristics, providing an illuminating glimpse into professional journalism's self-conception in relation to a challenge posed by networked journalism. The following chapter outlines the method of textual analysis by which the journalistic discourse surrounding WikiLeaks was examined.

Chapter 3: Methods

In order to study the ways in which professional news media conducted paradigm repair and boundary work regarding WikiLeaks, this study employed textual analysis of the discourse about WikiLeaks produced by a broad range of news media sources. Qualitative textual analysis has been by far the most widely used form of data analysis in paradigm repair and boundary work studies (e.g., Berkowitz, 2000; Bicket & Wall, 2007; Bishop, 1999, 2004; Hindman, 2003; Reese, 1990) because those processes involve giving meaning to an event or actor through public discourse (Carlson, 2012), and textual analysis allows researchers to uncover and examine the latent values of a text that produce these meanings.

The textual analysis for this study was guided by a process called ethnographic content analysis, which aims to achieve validity and rigor in textual analysis by examining key texts multiple times and by inductively generating and categorizing themes that emerge. In ethnographic content analysis, the goal "is to be systematic and analytic but not rigid" (Altheide, 1996, p. 16). Themes and categories guide the initial examination of the data, but additional themes are expected to emerge throughout the process of analysis. Ethnographic content analysis is similar to grounded-theory approaches in that both aim for clear description and classification of emergent themes and involve movement back and forth between theory and text, but grounded theory is more explicitly oriented toward theory building, while ethnographic content analysis is more descriptively and definitionally oriented (Altheide, 1996).

The goal of this study was to map the contours of the American journalistic paradigm by examining actors from a variety of locations within and around it, including traditional professional news organizations, institutional publications of media criticism, and alternative journalistic outlets, both liberal and conservative. Through this varied sample selection, comparisons are able to be made within categories and groups between both typical cases and those at several extremes, allowing for a fuller picture of the discursive area being studied (Altheide, 1996).

To achieve this variety of key symbolic actors, what Altheide (1996) calls "theoretical sampling" was employed (See Table 1). Sampling was conceptualized in a series of concentric circles, starting with the *New York Times* at the center because of its unique place of influence within the American journalistic paradigm (Golan, 2006; Reese & Danielian, 1989) and because of its working relationship with WikiLeaks that was unique among American news organizations. Next, a set of influential news organizations within American professional journalism was chosen, with representations of various forms of media—print (the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*), television (CNN), and radio (NPR). These organizations were chosen for their influence and, particularly in the case of CNN, for its place near the center of the American journalistic spectrum regarding objectivity, as opposed to the more partisan approaches of Fox News and MSNBC.

The next level of sampling took place within professional media criticism—a group of organizations that examine and critique American professional journalism from a place partially or wholly within the professional paradigm itself. The country's two most prominent journalism reviews, the *Columbia Journalism Review* and the *American Journalism Review*, were included, as well as two professionally oriented online journalism criticism publications, the *Online Journalism Review*, run by the Knight Digital Media Center at the University of Southern California and the University of California at Berkeley, and *MediaShift*, run by the public television network PBS. Next, a set of alternative journalism sources was chosen: These sources were chosen because they shared some characteristics with traditional professional news organizations—a mix of reportage and opinion, and an institutional or quasi-institutional location—in order to make more revealing comparisons with those professional news organizations. Among liberal organizations, the magazines *The Nation* and *Mother Jones* as well as the online magazine *Salon* and the blog group *Talking Points Memo* were chosen; among conservative organizations, the sites the *Daily Caller* (founded by conservative commentator Tucker Carlson), and *Big Government* and *Big Journalism* (founded by conservative digital media entrepreneur Andrew Breitbart) were chosen. Though it does no traditional reportage, the conservative aggregator Drudge Report was also included because of its outsized influence in online news coverage (Sappell, 2007; Weiss, 2007). Finally, the British newspaper the *Guardian* was chosen as a non-American news organization to aid in calibrating the American journalistic paradigm: It was chosen because of its relationship with WikiLeaks and its influence in that country and globally (Schlesinger, 2006).

Next, a sample of texts about WikiLeaks was chosen from each of those organizations. The time frame used went from WikiLeaks' origin in October 2006 through April 30, 2011, just after the release of the Guantánamo Files, the last major WikiLeaks release at the time the sample was drawn (October through December 2011). In order to capture as many of the texts from that time period as possible, several sources were used, including each site's archives, the Google News Archive, and the Factiva online database. In each case, the words "WikiLeaks" and/or "Assange" were the primary search terms used. Any type of content from each organization's site was considered, including news articles, columns, editorials, letters to the editor, videos, podcasts, transcripts, and blog posts. (The exception was CNN, which only included transcripts of on-air discourse about WikiLeaks or Assange.) Because paradigm repair and boundary work processes center on the deviant actor itself, only content that contained substantive statements about WikiLeaks itself was included. Texts that were about the contents of WikiLeaks' releases with only a passing reference to WikiLeaks itself were thus not included. Content that dealt substantively with Bradley Manning, WikiLeaks' alleged source for its major leaks of 2010, was also included, though it rarely yielded significant discourse about WikiLeaks itself.

These sampling methods yielded a large pool of content, which is detailed and categorized in Table 1. It is important to note that this type of analysis cannot reveal the internal disputes that surely occurred at each organization regarding WikiLeaks and how it should be characterized, though some conflicting texts hint at some disagreement. While each organization produces other forms of discourse, including employees' Twitter accounts and executives' comments in other official channels, examining all of the material published under the organizations' official auspices is sufficient to provide a general understanding of their public discourse.

The sample pool from each organization—particularly the largest news organizations—is quite large for textual analysis, though not unprecedented (e.g., Carlson, 2012). Each piece of content within the sample was examined, though within each organization's sample, a group of texts that contained more extensive discourse regarding WikiLeaks was informally identified and examined at more length; these are also listed in Table 1. Because an institution's discursive rhetoric can take on different meanings depending on its location within the organization, texts were labeled by their type of content and author. Texts that were labeled as opinion and texts written by individuals near the center of the organization (i.e. editors, as opposed to contributors from outside the organization) were given special attention because paradigm repair and boundary work often come most strongly from those sources (Bicket & Wall, 2007; Cecil, 2002).

Table 1: Discourse Examined for Study

Organization Name	Medium	Total Texts (Approx.)	In-Depth Texts
Professional media, WikiLeaks relationship			
New York Times	Newspaper/Website	155	35
Professional media			
Washington Post	Newspaper/Website	109	15
Wall Street Journal	Newspaper/Website	145	20
CNN	TV	280*	45
NPR	Radio/Website	164	20
Professional media criticism			
Columbia Journalism Review	Magazine/Website	69	10
American Journalism Review	Magazine/Website	5	5
Online Journalism Review	Website	2	2
PBS *MediaShift*	Website	11	6
Alternative media – liberal			
The Nation	Magazine/Website	239	10
Salon	Website	122	15
Mother Jones	Magazine/Website	59	7
Talking Points Memo	Blog Network	68	4
Alternative media –conservative			
Daily Caller	Website	70	5
Big Government/*Big Journalism*	Blog Network	34	8
Drudge Report	Aggregator	151	0
British professional media, WikiLeaks relationship			
Guardian	Newspaper/Website	558**	45

**Each text is a one-hour on-air transcript.*

***Includes texts from the* Observer, *the* Guardian*'s weekly sister paper which shares its website.*

Potential themes were identified before analysis began through a review of relevant literature; discourse was classified and organized within each organization according to these themes, then combined and compared once initial analysis was complete, consistent with the thematic analysis techniques prescribed by Altheide (1996) and Patton (1990). One of the themes, original reporting, emerged inductively from the texts during analysis. After relevant literature regarding that theme was analyzed to help identify and clarify it, texts identified with that theme were re-examined.

It is important to note that the purpose of this research method is not to evaluate the veracity of these organizations' characterizations of WikiLeaks; it is instead to examine the nature of the discourse itself. As outlined in the previous chapter, WikiLeaks has indeed exhibited behavior that could be reasonably characterized as unstable, eccentric, or erratic, including infighting among members, dramatic shifts in operation, and suspicion of its collaborators (e.g., Beckett & Ball, 2012; Domscheit-Berg, 2011; Rusbridger, 2011); however, this does not preclude the existence of paradigm repair and boundary maintenance in news organizations' description of it, or their use of it to position their own professional location. This behavior is just one of many aspects for news organizations to emphasize when covering WikiLeaks, and there are a number of possible interpretations for them to take from it. This study examines the emphases and interpretations of these organizations in particular.

Chapter 4: Results

The broad corpus of textual discourse examined in the professional media, alternative media, and media criticism constituted a rich and complex body of paradigm repair and boundary work. As a whole, the discourse characterized WikiLeaks with growing concern and derision beginning with its first major release in April 2010 ("Collateral Murder") and peaking in December 2010 with Assange's arrest shortly after WikiLeaks' release of the diplomatic cables. The discourse's path was shaped by three temporal turning points, all in 2010. First, the release of the Afghanistan war logs in July 2010 centered discourse around a concern about WikiLeaks' revelation of the identities of allied informants there. Second, the release of the diplomatic cables in November 2010 thrust WikiLeaks to the forefront of the news media's attention, calcifying the opposition toward that had been building over the previous several months. And third, Assange's release on bail and placement under house arrest on December 14, 2010, signaled the formal denouement of the WikiLeaks story for the professional media. Subsequent coverage slowed dramatically, shifting toward a retrospective tone and a focus on the imprisonment of alleged WikiLeaks source Bradley Manning.

Throughout this time, journalists engaged in paradigm repair and boundary work in the four general areas defined earlier—institutionality, reporter-source relationships, original reporting, and objectivity. This chapter will examine each of those themes in turn, using them to illuminate the contours of the journalistic paradigm, including those organizations that defended WikiLeaks or were ambivalent. The results aid our understanding of the complex set of meanings embodied and invoked for each concept within the journalistic paradigm.

INSTITUTIONALITY

As a whole, the professional news media responded to WikiLeaks' nontraditional, diffused organizational structure by repeatedly characterizing WikiLeaks as an unstable group that essentially consisted solely of an erratic, egomaniacal figure who should not be taken seriously. This picture of WikiLeaks did not begin in earnest until after the group edged closer to traditional news organizations and emerged as a global journalistic player by working with them on and then releasing the Afghanistan leak in July; in fact, up until that point, most news organizations portrayed the group's amorphous structure as an asset for playing a watchdog role and eluding censorship. In one typical description, the *Washington Post* depicted its networked nature as a critical tool for both its accessibility and its power to resist oppressive actors: "Lacking a home base or traditional infrastructure, it is almost entirely virtual, relying on servers and helpers in dozens of countries. It is accessible anywhere the Internet goes, yet it is relatively immune from pressure from censors, lawyers or local governments" (Warrick, 2010, para. 6). Similar characterizations were found in the *New York Times*, NPR, the *Guardian*, and the alternative news source *Salon* (Cohen & Stelter, 2010; Greenwald, 2010c; Luft, 2009b; Sydell, 2008).

WikiLeaks' structure was also occasionally described in these sympathetic terms after its rise to prominence—for example, just after the Afghanistan leak, one *Guardian* columnist called the group "brilliantly constructed" (Cadwalladr, 2010, para. 38) and in December 2010, a CNN anchor said Assange was keeping WikiLeaks' workings secret "so that WikiLeaks workers and staffers are kept safe, he says, because the work that they do is so important" (Holmes et al., 2010a). But by and large, this motif had disappeared from discourse about WikiLeaks by mid-2010, and by the following spring, the *New York*

Times' book on WikiLeaks described the same structure in terms that connoted naiveté about the feasibility of such a decentralized venture (Burns & Somaiya, 2011).

In its place was a portrayal of WikiLeaks that continually connoted instability and shadowiness, even manifesting skepticism about its legitimacy as an organization in the first place. In one *Times* article about Daniel Domscheit-Berg's defection from the group, Assange was referred to not as a bona fide leader but as WikiLeaks' "figurehead" (Somaiya, 2010a, para. 2). The article also put scare quotes around WikiLeaks' "suspending" Domscheit-Berg, thus undermining the legitimacy of WikiLeaks to take such apparently formal action (para. 6). This was part of a pattern for the *Times* in particular, which also referred to WikiLeaks members as "loyalists" and "conspirators," (Burns & Somaiya, 2010a, para. 2, 36) rather than more institutional titles such as colleagues, staff, volunteers, or members. Other mainstream news organizations like the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* occasionally showed similar reluctance to confer institutional legitimacy, referring to Assange's titles or roles as "self-described" or "self-appointed" (Cody, 2010b, para. 3; Weidner, 2010, para. 8). Some mainstream news organizations also emphasized their skepticism of WikiLeaks' organizational legitimacy by setting it against established institutions. A source quoted approvingly in a *Times* public editor's column compared the group unfavorably to the Associated Press, one of modern journalism's oldest, largest, and most respected institutions (Brisbane, 2010), and *Guardian* editor David Leigh set up a dichotomy between WikiLeaks and "sensible media organizations" (Wells, 2010). Likewise, a PBS *MediaShift* columnist contrasted the way the *Times* was "responsibly confronting a new journalistic reality," with Assange's vanity and pettiness (Hannah, 2011, para. 15).

A key reason for this institutional skepticism of WikiLeaks was its geographical rootlessness. The professional news media were preoccupied with this characteristic, frequently mentioning it as one of WikiLeaks' and Assange's core defining attributes. The adjective most often used to describe Assange was "nomadic" (e.g., Cody, 2010a; Johnson, 2010; Whalen, 2010c), and the anecdotal detail employed most often was his habit of sleeping on the couches on friends (e.g., Cadwalladr, 2010; Burns & Somaiya, 2011; Thiessen, 2010c). Assange and WikiLeaks' choices of unorthodox, less rooted communication technology were of particular interest to many in the professional news media: The group's use of Twitter, Skype, and regularly changing mobile phones were often marveled at as evidence of the group's bizarre nonconformity to institutional norms (Burns & Schmitt, 2010; Burns & Somaiya, 2010b, 2011; Rusbridger, 2011). (It was rare for the news organizations to note that WikiLeaks was so difficult to pin down geographically in large part because of the scrutiny it was facing because of its publishing; the *Guardian* was the only professional news organization to point this out with any frequency.) What precisely were the professional news media hoping to accomplish by portraying Assange and WikiLeaks in such terms? On a few occasions, the organizations' editors made the implied point clear: WikiLeaks' geographical rootlessness was the type of behavior engaged in not by established news organizations but by criminals. The *Times*' Bill Keller called Assange "a source who acted like a fugitive" (2011a, para. 18), and the *Guardian*'s Leigh chided Assange for talking about justice while making "a virtue out of a nomadic, virtually stateless, existence that circumvented traditional systems of justice" (2011, para. 5). It was the same behavior his colleagues had described as brilliant months earlier, but now that WikiLeaks had emerged as more than a curiosity they saw it as a threat that could endanger their profession's credibility.

Another critical step in the process of highlighting and denigrating WikiLeaks' lack of institutionality was that of reducing the organization to a single person—Julian

Assange. An October 2010 *Times* feature on Assange was most direct in this emphasis, as its central premise was that Assange was increasingly being abandoned by his collaborators because of his egomaniacal behavior. As a result, the article stated, Assange was performing almost every duty in the group unilaterally, leaving WikiLeaks with an "apparent lack of accountability to anybody but himself" (Burns & Somaiya, 2010a, para. 37). That narrative was quickly picked up by the *Washington Post*, which followed with its own story using similarly isolating language the next day (Nakashima & Faiola, 2010). (*The Wall Street Journal* also followed up on the *Times*' report, but with a much more muted tone and a response from a WikiLeaks spokesman other than Assange [Whalen, 2010b].) The WikiLeaks-as-Assange narrative took such firm hold of media discourse that by early December, several columnists were attributing the act of publishing diplomatic cables to Assange himself, rather than WikiLeaks (Parker, 2010; Smith, 2010).

It is important to note that the *Times* feature was tied to several defections of key WikiLeaks members—most notably Domscheit-Berg—and relied in part on Assange's own words for its conflation of WikiLeaks with Assange himself, particularly a quotation attributed to Assange declaring that he was "the heart and soul of this organization, its founder, philosopher, spokesperson, original coder, organizer, financier, and all the rest" (Burns & Somaiya, 2010a, para. 24). Still, the reduction of WikiLeaks to solely Assange was not a foregone conclusion, as other news organizations, particularly the alternative media and the *Guardian* argued. The point was made most forcefully before the *Times*' feature in a column in the *Nation* by philosophy professor Peter Ludlow. "The traditional media, governments and their security organizations just cannot get unglued from the idea that there must be a single mastermind behind an operation like WikiLeaks," Ludlow argued. "This is not a one-man or even one-group operation. It is a network of thousands motivated by a shared hacktivist culture and ethic. And with or without Assange, it is not going away" (2010, para. 17). Alternative and some mainstream journalists made attempts elsewhere to separate Assange and WikiLeaks in the public's mind, as did Assange himself (Faiola, 2011; Pollitt, 2010; Walker, 2010). A *Guardian* editorial lamented that the WikiLeaks story was being reduced to a biopic of Julian Assange, calling it "limiting, and highly diversionary" ("WikiLeaks: The man and the idea," 2010, para. 5).

Still, the depiction of WikiLeaks as a pseudo-organizational front for Assange himself remained the dominant one among the professional news media in late 2010 and early 2011. Stripping WikiLeaks' institutional cachet allowed professional journalism to more easily dismiss the group's journalistic credibility and attack it as unstable, and virtually every description of Assange aided in that dismissal. In the pages of *Times*, he was variously described as "secretive, shadowy"; "a loose cannon"; "dictatorial, eccentric and capricious"; and "elusive, manipulative and volatile" (Burns & Schmitt, 2010, para. 7; Burns & Somaiya, 2010a, para. 21; Ro. Cohen, 2010, para. 15; Keller, 2011a, para. 3). Elsewhere, "shadowy" was one of the descriptives of choice for WikiLeaks and Assange, and "paranoid" for Assange himself (e.g., Folkenflik, 2010; Kurtz, 2010d; Meares, 2010a; Somaiya, 2011). There was no doubt that WikiLeaks and Assange's organizational and personal eccentricities made them untrustworthy in the eyes of the professional news media. The view of Assange—and, by extension, WikiLeaks—that these descriptions were meant to encourage found their fullest expression in the writings of conservative alternative media sources such as the *Daily Caller* and *Big Journalism*, which declared their distrust for Assange with terms like "creepy" and "jerkwad scavenger" (Labash, 2010, para. 3; Loesch, 2010, para. 1). Conservative *Washington Post* columnist Kathleen Parker conveyed the fear of WikiLeaks as an unstable, unaccountable group united only by their devotion to strange technologies: "Assange is the king brat, but only du jour. … Alas, we are at the mercy of giddy, power-hungry nerds operating beyond the burden of responsibility or accountability" (2010, para. 4).

One of the primary themes used to dismiss WikiLeaks' journalistic value after it had been reduced to Assange was to emphasize what Keller called Assange's "outlaw celebrity," painting a picture of a man who was more interested in cultivating a myth around himself than being the leader of a serious news organization (Keller, 2011a, para. 28). Two news organizations were particularly enamored with this image of Assange: the *New York Times*, which repeatedly described his supporters in star-struck terms and used phrases such as "cult figure" and "growing myth" to characterize Assange (Burns & Somaiya, 2010b; Keller, 2011a, para. 28; Somaiya, 2010b, para. 13); and CNN, which was one of the primary articulators of the metaphor of Assange as James Bond (or James Bond villain) and described his bail release hearing as "a celebrity trial" (Crowley et al., 2010; Lemon et al., 2010a). CNN, with its limited discursive space and more celebrity-driven orientation, might be expected to reduce a complex character to a celebrity or James Bond type, but the *Times*' fixation on persona and celebrity in particular functioned as an attempt to discredit him as a glory hound rather than a serious journalist. This was most evident in Keller's (2011a) depiction of Assange's transformation into a celebrity, which implied that he had abandoned whatever principles first drove WikiLeaks in favor of the allure of global fame. This effort to characterize WikiLeaks as celebrity vehicle rather than journalistic enterprise left the professional news media grappling with two inconsistencies: First, they portrayed Assange as solely responsible for his own celebrity, when in fact celebrity is largely the product the media themselves (Turner, 2006). And second, they had created two images of Assange at odds with each other in their work to discredit him—he was both elusive and ubiquitous, shadowy and self-promoting.

Asserting the Superiority of Institutionality

When journalists were willing to ascribe some credibility to WikiLeaks, they did so almost exclusively through its connections with established news organizations. According to several commentators in the professional news media, one of the primary reasons WikiLeaks partnered with those news organizations—along with their ability to do original reporting, which we will examine later in this chapter—was to be attributed some of their credibility by association (Feldstein, 2010; Kurtz, 2010c, 2011). For the *Wall Street Journal*, these associations of reputation were a concern for the news organizations themselves, as an editorial chastised WikiLeaks' media partners for "validating Mr. Assange's methods by flying in publishing formation with him" ("WikiLeaks 'bastards,'" para. 10). But the *American Journalism Review*'s Mark Feldstein considered the arrangements a beneficial one for both sides, as it allowed WikiLeaks to graft onto news organizations' respectability while keeping those organizations at arm's length from "lawbreaking informants" (2010, para. 10). Throughout this commentary ran the clear—and taken-for-granted—implication that WikiLeaks had no respectability in itself, but was desperately trying to gain it by associating itself with established, institutional organizations.

But credibility paled in importance as an institutional attribute in journalists' minds in comparison with accountability. This emerged in the WikiLeaks discourse as the chief value of institutions: To provide structures that put checks on individual behavior, ensuring that they conformed to professional norms and served the public good. The fear of what might happen without those structures was best articulated by former

New York Times attorney Floyd Abrams in a conversation with a *Wall Street Journal* editor, in which he voiced his concern about “this free-floating entity out there, unbound by anything … except its own advocacy of the proposition that secrets are bad” having access to thousands of classified documents (Jones, 2010b). These concerns were echoed elsewhere in the professional news media, conservative alternative media, and professional media criticism (Hartman, 2010; Sanchez, Baldwin, Rowlands, & Myers, 2010; Ward, 2010). This accountability that separated journalism from non-journalism was particularly located in news organizations’ editorial structure, as an NPR report stated: “There is debate in the U.S. and elsewhere about whether Assange is indeed a journalist, as WikiLeaks lacks the clear editorial structure of more traditional media” (Kuhn, 2011).

An instructive example of the importance of this concept of formal editorial accountability to journalistic institutionality came in the announcement of former WikiLeaks staffer Domscheit-Berg’s WikiLeaks alternative, Openleaks, which would work only with other news organizations and would not publish information itself. *Wall Street Journal* columnist and former publisher Gordon Crovitz (2010c) commended Openleaks for recognizing the importance of aligning itself with structures of accountability: “News organizations understand accountability, even if they don't always meet the highest standards, and they routinely apply judgment about how they work with sources and leaked material. … Unlike Mr. Assange, editors answer to someone, namely readers and viewers” (para. 7, 11). Of course, Assange also answers to his readers, which means that what Crovitz actually refers to in this argument as the difference between the two groups are the editorial/institutional structures that *force* editors in traditional news organizations to answer to readers. A *New York Times* interview with Domscheit-Berg revealed a similar confusion about the perceived lack of organizational accountability in WikiLeaks:

> NYT: ‘What’s your official title at OpenLeaks, the new antisecrecy organization you’re about to start?’
>
> Domscheit-Berg: ‘My official title? We are trying to avoid all these things.’
>
> NYT: ‘Are you at least the boss?’
>
> Domscheit-Berg: ‘The boss? No, no, no, I’m not anyone’s boss. That’s funny. I’ll have to tell the other guys, they will have a hard laugh on this one’ (para. 15-18).

The misunderstanding reveals the wide gulf between the way WikiLeaks’ (former) members saw their own editorial structure and the way professional journalists saw it: The *Times* had assumed that Openleaks’ improvement over WikiLeaks was its adoption of a formal editorial structure designed to ensure accountability, while Domscheit-Berg saw its amorphous structure as an asset, not a limitation—in fact, he created his organization to be more unstructured than WikiLeaks had been.

There were some dissenting voices amid the dominant discourse about the unreliability of WikiLeaks and the superiority of the professional media’s institutional model. Several people in the liberal alternative media or within academia identified WikiLeaks as a threat to the professional media’s gatekeeping authority and characterized the media’s discourse about the group as an attempt to maintain authority—a similar argument to the one this paper makes (Gosztola, 2011; Greenwald, 2010b; Niles, 2010). There were also rare examples in the professional media and media criticism of journalists resisting the idea of institutionality as normative. For example, a CNN correspondent acknowledged that WikiLeaks could be a threat to organizations such as hers but praised its potentially democratizing effects nonetheless (King et al., 2010a), and the *Wall Street Journal* quoted an *Economist* editor calling for WikiLeaks to be judged by its own standards rather than the institutional media's (Hickins & Rutkoff, 2010). And the *Columbia Journalism Review*'s Joel Meares (2010c) criticized professional journalists for discrediting WikiLeaks because of its lack of institutional form: "To dismiss WikiLeaks and wait for more institutionalized ways of increasing transparency feels like a euphemism for capitulating to the status quo" (para. 10).

But as a whole, this dimension of professional journalism's paradigm repair and boundary work regarding WikiLeaks was strikingly pervasive and effective. By the end of 2010, the images of WikiLeaks and Assange among the American professional news media had been fused almost entirely, and that image was of a mythologized, iconized international man of mystery who worked alone, trusted no one, and could be trusted by no one, either. The professional news media presented its own institutions as the source of everything Assange and WikiLeaks lacked in this dimension: accountability, structure, credibility, and restraint. These were the important values represented by institutions, and no one without them could properly be practicing journalism. The effect of repair work was particularly evident in the stream of commentary offering unsolicited advice to WikiLeaks to take on these characteristics if it wanted to be taken seriously as part of the journalistic community—as one *Guardian* reporter called them, "pompous 'WikiLeaks needs to grow up' advice pieces" (Adams & Weaver, 2010, para. 120). In particular, two people from outside the *Times* showed the salience of this paradigm repair outside professional journalism itself. In one online column, a professor advised WikiLeaks to "professionalize and depersonalize itself as much as possible" (Deibert, 2010, para. 6) and as quoted in another, a former journalist warned that "they are going to have to evolve into an organization that has an address and identity or the clock will run out on that level of collaboration" (Carr, 2010, para. 27). The paradigm repair and boundary maintenance were complete; WikiLeaks had been placed outside the boundaries of professional journalism and needed to institutionalize itself to gain entry.

REPORTER-SOURCE RELATIONSHIPS

WikiLeaks' challenge to the government officials with whom professional journalists share a culture, and their near-complete lack of relationship with those officials, forced journalists to pick sides between their official sources and a deviant news organization threatening those sources. By and large, professional journalists chose to side with their official sources and ostracize WikiLeaks, though they attempted to do so while convincing the public that they were not beholden to those officials—a strategy that, as we will see, was not particularly effective.

Professional journalists identified with their official sources and defended their shared culture in a variety of ways in response to WikiLeaks, the most basic of which was their expression of concern over the potential damage this might do to the functioning of government. This was done most often in its most indirect form—by publicizing government officials' regular condemnations of WikiLeaks largely without challenge. These news organizations provided a forum for government complaints about the threats caused by WikiLeaks' publications predominantly in news articles (e.g., Barnes & Whalen, 2010; Schmitt, 2010) but also in op-ed columns by political figures (Feinstein, 2010) and reprinting government statements ("Statement of National Security Adviser," 2010). In many cases, this discourse also extended to the government's aspersions about WikiLeaks itself, not just its documents. *The New York Times*, for example, reported that WikiLeaks would not answer government phone calls and that the Pentagon's attempts at "asking WikiLeaks respectfully" for its cooperation would likely be ignored (Schmitt, 2010, para. 11; Shanker, 2010). In the wake of the Afghanistan document leak, a *Washington Post* news article asserted that WikiLeaks' methods rather than its documents were what had drawn the ire of government officials over the years (Nakashima & Warrick, 2010), and after WikiLeaks intensified its redaction process months later, the paper quoted an anonymous government source as saying, "We don't trust their judgment" (Lynch & Finn, 2010, para. 14).

While these assertions essentially provided a megaphone for government officials already in power, relaying such rhetoric could be justified as part of an objective reporting of journalists' beats (Marshall, 2010). But the professional news media went further, often voicing their own concern about potential damage to government, without attributing it to government sources. In news coverage, the leaks were repeatedly framed in terms of their threat to the government, rather than the information they revealed to the public (e.g., N. Cohen, 2010; Faiola, 2010; Whitfield et al., 2010a), and this perspective was only intensified in opinion sections. In the *Washington Post*, staff columnists referred to WikiLeaks as doing "immeasurable and irreparable harm" to the U.S. government and complained, "So much for national security" (C. King, 2010, para. 7; Thiessen, 2010a, para. 3), and *Wall Street Journal* columnists said WikiLeaks was destroying trust in the U.S. government's reliability and "waging war on its ability to conduct diplomacy and defend itself" (Schoenfeld, 2010, para. 10). What is particularly remarkable in this discourse is the degree to which these media commentators identified with the government itself. For example, several media members referred to the government as "we" and "our" (Krauthammer, 2010; Phillips et al., 2010b), and others brainstormed suggestions for the government to stop Assange ("Attack on WikiLeaks," 2010; Thiessen, 2010d). The former political operatives often summoned as analysts on op-ed pages and cable news programs were, as one might expect, especially strong in their identification with government sources; David Gergen, a former adviser to President Bill

Clinton, opined that Assange "isn't fit to lick Hillary's [Clinton] boots" (King et al., 2010b), and former Republican strategist Tony Blankley said the only opinion that mattered about whether WikiLeaks documents harmed the government—including his own—was Defense Secretary Robert Gates' (Roberts et al., 2010b).

But this identification with the government sources' concern over the potential effects of WikiLeaks' publications was not the primary form of paradigm repair and boundary work in this area. After all, this type of rhetoric alone would also indict the *New York Times* and other mainstream news organizations that joined with WikiLeaks in publishing the documents. In order to separate those publications from WikiLeaks, they needed to demonstrate how their dealings with government fit into the prescribed roles and behaviors for reporter-source relationships.

To do so, the professional news media held themselves up as a model of how to interact with government officials in a proper manner. *The New York Times* was the primary news organization to perform this type of repair, since they were the only American news organization to engage in significant interaction with the government over the leaks and as such, were the primary news organization in need of such repair. *Times* editors and reporters detailed their negotiations with government officials in several forums—particularly NPR and CNN—describing their regular discussions with government officials as "businesslike," "serious," and "fruitful" (Adams & Vascellaro, 2010, para. 19; Keller, 2011a, para. 37). The *Times* was trusted enough by the U.S. government that it even acted as an intermediary between government officials and WikiLeaks, passing on requests from one party to the other while the two were not communicating directly with each other. While other journalists and critics occasionally cited the *Times*' behavior as an example of how to deal responsibly with government officials (Farhi, 2010; Silverman, 2010), the approval that mattered far more to the *Times* was that of the government itself. In the sample examined for this study, *Times* journalists pointed out the government's approval of their interaction with them six times (Cox, 2010a; Gross, 2010a, 2011; Keller, 2011a; Phillips et al., 2010a; "The War Logs Articles," 2010). The *Times* had acted in a way that its official sources saw as professional and responsible, and it quite clearly saw that approval as one of the most important pieces of evidence before the public of its propriety in handling a controversial story.

Government officials did the *Times* a particular favor by directly contrasting its behavior with what they saw as the recklessness of WikiLeaks, with the U.S. attorney general even saying at one point, "'I think one can compare the way in which various news organizations that have been involved in this have acted, as opposed to the way in which WikiLeaks has' … The news organizations, he said, acted in a 'responsible manner'" (Perez & Whalen, 2010, para. 6). journalists echoed that comparison, repeatedly denigrating WikiLeaks for not giving government officials a chance to weigh in on the documents before they were published. An NPR news article cited it as a strike against WikiLeaks in determining whether it should be considered journalistic (Folkenflik, 2010), and several commentators implied or explicitly stated the same argument (L. King, 2010; Thiessen, 2010c). As sometime *Washington Post* attorney Jeffrey Smith put it, "it is hard to argue, based on the available facts, that Assange deserves the same treatment as a responsible news organization that carefully considers the views of the government before deciding what, if any, classified information to publish" (2010, para. 4).

A key part of this repair work was the establishment of this relationship between journalists and sources in the public's mind as a routine, normative practice in professional journalism. It may be taken for granted within journalistic circles that reporters work in concert with their sources, operating in such symbiotic terms. But the notion of a news organization giving government officials repeated prior notice of a major publication of confidential documents may strike much of the public as alarming, so it was necessary for journalists to first persuade the public that this was, in fact, a journalistic norm in order to convince it that WikiLeaks was brazenly violating that norm. (This norm is described in detail in a 2006 *American Journalism Review* article [Smolkin, 2006], and the most often cited example is that of the *New York Times*' withholding publication of its 2005 warrantless wiretapping story for more than a year in part at the White House's request.) This establishment of prior government notification as a professional norm was done most simply in a descriptive paragraph in a *Wall Street Journal* news article: "When established news organizations obtain classified information, they rarely publish it wholesale or without first consulting the government to authenticate the information and to ensure it doesn't compromise national security. WikiLeaks' model eschews that step" (Entous & Perez, 2010). More often, it was done through columns and commentary, using examples from past stories (Kurtz, 2010c; Rieder, 2010; Thiessen, 2010c). The norm was communicated most effectively when, once again, it was voiced as a lament from a government official himself, this time in a CNN interview:

One of the great tragedies from my perspective on this from a journalistic perspective is if you had gotten a hold of those documents, John, you would have called me up and said, Geoff, we've got something that we think is worth publishing, but we need to have a conversation with you about whether it might in the process endanger the lives of American forces or our nation's security. We were not afforded that conversation by this group. They published, and now we're dealing with the consequences afterwards (King, Borger, & Dominick, 2010a).

Through discourse such as this, the professional news media were able to present a clear statement to the public, that they routinely engage in the journalistic norm of consulting with government officials before publishing important documents but WikiLeaks does not, undermining the government's authority and their own credibility.

Journalists from the *Times* (and, to a lesser extent, the *Guardian*) also addressed potential public concern about their close consultation with government sources by acknowledging a certain degree of conflict in that relationship. *Times* executive editor Bill Keller and one *Times* reporter, for example, described the paper's meetings with administration officials as "tense," with "an undertone of suppressed outrage and frustration" (Keller, 2011a, para. 36)—the *Guardian* also described one of its meetings in such terms (Leigh & Harding, 2011). But when Keller did write about tension in his paper's relationship with government sources, he couched the conflict in statements about the *Times*' respect for the government's requests and about the routine nature of the relationship. As mentioned earlier, he referred to the *Times*' meetings with government officials as being daily and businesslike, and said, "We listen to the government's case for secrecy with great respect, but we do not always agree" ("Answers to Readers' Questions," 2010, para. 24; Keller, 2011a). Through that repair, the *Times* attempted to assert to the public that as a proper government watchdog, it does have conflict with its government sources, but that unlike WikiLeaks, it handles its conflict with government officials in an acceptable way, within appropriate, established journalistic roles.

Professional journalists defended their symbiotic relationship with government officials most explicitly by emphasizing their fundamental support for the government's claims to authority. Three *Times* opinion pieces illustrated this point most prominently. In one text, Keller (2011a) defended the *Times*' handling of the leaked documents by describing the paper's "large and personal stake in the country's security" (unlike, apparently, WikiLeaks) (para. 53). In another, conservative columnist David Brooks (2010) referred to the *Times*' professional obligation to filter leaked information according to what would best preserve "world order" maintained by diplomats and soldiers—a value he asserted that Assange did not share. And the *New Yorker*'s George Packer was quoted approvingly by *Times* media columnist David Carr (2010) equating journalism with upholding the authority of democratic governmental institutions, saying of WikiLeaks, "They simply believe that the State Department is an illegitimate organization that needs to be exposed, which is not really journalism" (para. 11). Carr added that "mainstream media may spend a lot of time trying to ferret information out of official hands, but they largely operate in the belief that the state is legitimate and entitled to at least some of its secrets" (para. 21). (Interestingly enough, this was an argument that gained traction within at least some corners of the liberal alternative media, being made in both *Mother Jones* and *Talking Points Memo* [Drum, 2010; Marshall, 2010]). Elsewhere, commentators noted that WikiLeaks operates outside U.S. jurisdiction or, for that matter, a belief in its legitimacy (King et al., 2010b; Kurtz, 2010b; Sanchez et al., 2010). Journalism, the way the professional news media defined and defended their paradigm in this case, must include a fundamentally supportive relationship between journalists and officials, something WikiLeaks does not have.

Internal Repair Differences

This discourse was not an example of thoroughly unified repair and boundary work, however; it ran into significant resistance, mostly from outside professional journalism but also, to a lesser extent, from within it. Virtually every component of this repair work was challenged: The idea that the leaks presented a danger to the U.S. government (or that the media should be concerned about such a danger), WikiLeaks as a dysfunctional or inappropriate model for dealing with government, and the idea that journalists and government officials should be engaged in a symbiotic relationship. The effect was a severely weakened attempt at paradigm repair resulting in an ambiguous response to the challenge to the reporter-source relationship presented by the WikiLeaks case.

At the most basic discursive level, some journalists and critics observed that the leaks' damage to the functioning of government was not nearly as great as government officials claimed. Unlike the other areas of challenge to this repair work, this argument was put forward largely by two core professional news organizations themselves—the *Times* and the *Guardian*. Because these were the only two organizations in this survey to publish WikiLeaks' documents, their argument was put forward much more as self-defense than as a defense of WikiLeaks. The *Times*' defense was less vigorous but still unequivocal in its dismissal of the leaks' damage, though it always couched its dissent in an overall respect of the government's role and perspective. This approach was best illustrated in an editorial that argued that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's claim that the diplomatic cable leak would be damaging to national security was an exaggeration because the cables simply revealed that American diplomats are savvy, professional, and skillful ("WikiLeaks and the Diplomats," 2010).

By contrast, the *Guardian*'s tone toward the American government officials who criticized WikiLeaks was filled with bitterness and derision—more of it, in fact, than any source examined in this study, save perhaps for *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald. This tone began to take shape shortly after WikiLeaks' release of the diplomatic cables and U.S. politicians' subsequent calls for Assange to be arrested, prosecuted for espionage, or even killed. Day after day, *Guardian* reporters described the reaction among U.S. officials as "hysterical," "rabid," "bloodthirsty," "chilling," "savage," and "tipping over towards derangement," among other epithets (Adams & Weaver, 2010, para. 22, 32; Hirsch, 2010, para. 3; Milne, 2010, para. 1; Townsend, Harris, Smith, Sabbagh, & Halliday, 2010, para. 13; Weaver & Adams, 2010a, para. 89). In blog posts, the *Guardian*'s Washington reporters also mocked their American counterparts' lack of concern about this government rhetoric, asking sarcastic questions like, "Why ask about the biggest story of the year when you can instead talk inside baseball about Republicans versus Democrats?" (Weaver & Adams, 2010b, para. 164). The *Guardian*'s caustic tone was striking compared with American journalists' acquiescence, but it was also understandable—the *Guardian* had no real relationships with these official sources to protect. Several *Guardian* opinion pieces and blogs described WikiLeaks' conflict with government as being largely or even wholly between the group and the United States (Preston, 2010; Edwards, 2010), and the paper's editor-in-chief, Alan Rusbridger (2011), later described himself as a distant observer in London, astonished at the violent rhetoric toward WikiLeaks coming from Washington. In this way, the *Guardian* saw (and portrayed) itself much like the American alternative media did—as outsiders who watched with bewilderment the outrageous pronouncements of government officials and lamented the complicity of the American news media in them. The *Guardian* may have had source-based reporting routines to defend in other cases, but it was not threatened on that front by WikiLeaks, as the paper portrayed itself as being without a significant relationship with the U.S. government to protect. The primary officials with whom it did have a relationship that was crucial to its reporting routines—the British government—were far less vocal in their public reaction (Rusbridger, 2011). For the *Guardian*, then, this area of its paradigm was safely undisturbed, unlike the *Times*'.

Others—especially in the liberal alternative media—saw WikiLeaks as a threat to the U.S. government, but one that played a valuable role in exposing its monopoly on information and shifting the balance of power back toward the public. Several pieces in *the Nation* urged support for what one author called WikiLeaks' "public service" (Flanders, 2010)—its ability through the free flow of information to reveal truths that the establishment would prefer to keep secret ("First, They Came," 2010; Sifry, 2011b). *Salon* columnist Dan Gillmor summarized the argument succinctly: "What WikiLeaks represents is what governments and corporations fear: a threat to their cultures of secrecy and dominance in their domains" (2010a, para. 16). Isolated utterances of these sentiments could be found in the professional news media, such as a statement in a *Guardian* editorial that "WikiLeaks' chief crime has been to speak truth to power" ("Cyber Attacks," 2010, para. 5) and a *Washington Post* op-ed column by journalist Adam Penenberg calling WikiLeaks a "thorn in the side of secrecy-obsessed governments" (2011, para. 3).

According to this view, the government's denunciation of WikiLeaks was not done out of concern over national security, privacy, or even international embarrassment; instead, it was a desperate attempt to maintain a control over information that was rapidly slipping away. Several writers in the alternative media made this connection, led by *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald, who wrote that "The public and private organizations most eager to maintain complete secrecy around what they do—including numerous U.S. military and intelligence agencies—are obviously threatened by WikiLeaks' activities, which is why they seek to harass and cripple them" (2010a, para. 20). Elsewhere at *Salon*, the campaign against WikiLeaks was called a "war against freedom of speech" (Gillmor, 2010b, para. 3), and a post at the *Nation* argued that the government's efforts to discredit Assange were prompted by his revelations of their duplicity (Scheer, 2010). In another *Nation* article, open government advocate Micah Sifry extended the government's defense process against WikiLeaks to the media as well, concluding that

"At some fundamental level, they probably understand that the conditions for maintaining their monopoly on critical information have been broken" (2011b, para. 15). In essence, what these alternative-media commentators were describing was a paradigm repair process by the government that paralleled (and at times overlapped with) the one in the media being described in this study. Just as WikiLeaks' radically open networked journalism presented a challenge to the traditional professional media's longstanding control over the dissemination of information, so it also challenged government in the same way, and as these commentators recognized, the two groups responded in tandem.

Many in the alternative media also resisted the professional media's assertion that the normative, proper relationship between journalists and their official sources is one of general supportiveness and mutual trust. The argument for a skeptical, more adversarial relationship as the normative one between journalists and the government received a bit more support from professional journalists and media critics than the objection over the value of WikiLeaks' challenge to government. On CNN, anchor Rick Sanchez responded to a guest's assertion that Sanchez had an obligation to the security of the country's military efforts by saying that his highest obligation was instead to give the public the truth about its government (Sanchez et al., 2010). And *Time* editor Richard Stengel said on CNN that while the leaks had likely damaged the U.S. government, journalists' job was not to protect their country (Kurtz, 2010c). Likewise, at PBS' *MediaShift* site, journalism professor Stephen Ward (2010) wrote that "The role of a free press is not to serve the government or its diplomats. It is to serve the public who hold government accountable through information provided by the media" (para. 13). It was this role that WikiLeaks was playing, argued one writer for the *Nation*, who made an important distinction: If with the release of the diplomatic cables Assange was attacking the people of each of these countries as the U.S. government claimed, his behavior would indeed be terroristic. But if he was instead attacking government secrecy, he would simply be an honest journalist (Bromwich, 2011).

Two writers outside of the professional media argued most forcefully that the patriotic, government-supporting ethic of the American press was at odds with its supposedly cherished watchdog function. *Salon*'s Greenwald (2011) stated that reporting with the goal of protecting government's policy interests was not journalism but propaganda, and *MediaShift*'s Ward (2010) argued that the WikiLeaks episode had shown that reporters' commitment to a free press was often undermined by their patriotic, nationalistic impulses: "In times of conflict, the strong emotions of patriotism override journalists' in-principle commitment to critical informing the public and to impartiality. The word 'patriotism' rarely occurs in journalism codes of ethics but its influence on practice is substantial" (para. 11).

In this case, journalists' allegiance and deference to the government in general and their sources in particular led them to defend government officials by ostracizing WikiLeaks because of the threat it posed to them. Numerous people in the alternative media recognized this repair process; Greenwald in particular wrote about it at length in several posts (2010e, 2010f, 2010g, 2010h), suggesting that mainstream journalists were marginalizing WikiLeaks as part of their perceived role to serve government interests and protect their friends who were government sources. In doing so, he wrote a rather apt description of reporter-source relationship paradigm repair:

> Most political journalists rely on their relationships with government officials and come to like them and both identify and empathize with them. By contrast, WikiLeaks is truly adversarial to those powerful factions in exactly the way that these media figures are not: hence, the widespread media hatred and contempt for what WikiLeaks does. Just look at how important it was for Bill Keller to emphasize that the Government is criticizing WikiLeaks but not *The New York Times*; having the Government pleased with his behavior is his metric for

> assessing how good his “journalism” is. If the Government is patting him on the head, then it’s proof that he acted ‘responsibly.’ That servile-to-power mentality is what gets exposed by the contrast Wikileaks provides (2010g, para. 11).

In a podcast at the *Nation*, journalism scholar Jay Rosen (2011) made a more nuanced description of the same process, noting that journalists do consider themselves adversarial watchdogs of the government, but in comparison with WikiLeaks their true entwinement with official systems of power—an unacknowledged aspect of their paradigm—is revealed. By dismissing WikiLeaks’ approach to government as unreasonable, deviant, and irresponsible, journalists can resolve the dissonance that WikiLeaks exposes.

The fact that this paradigm repair process was perceived so clearly by so many of those observing the professional news media is evidence that it was not a particularly effective one, and that the paradigm itself was not consensually accepted, either. Balancing a self-conception as an adversarial, watchdog press with the mutual trust and shared culture found in the relationships with those whom one sees itself as watching is an extremely difficult task. In this case, the professional news media struggled to hold on to both of those ideas simultaneously—and, particularly, to convince the public that both of them were true. At the same time, however, they did find some success in producing a salient image of WikiLeaks as childishly taunting governments rather than seriously engaging with them. WikiLeaks actually asked the U.S. government for help redacting documents at least twice—it said it lacked the resources to do so properly—and was rejected both times (Greenwald, 2010e; Leigh & Harding, 2011), but that fact was rarely pointed out even by those in the alternative media. Instead, WikiLeaks was widely seen as having recklessly “dumped” the documents—an image the next area of paradigm repair did much to establish.

Original Reporting

While original reporting has not been particularly well developed as a concept in the study of the journalistic paradigm, it emerged as perhaps the most vigorous area of repair in the WikiLeaks case. More space was devoted in the professional media to demonstrating WikiLeaks' deficiency and their own authority in terms of original reporting than any other, yet their statements were met with more skepticism than any area with the exception of reporter-source relationships. Professional journalists sought to portray WikiLeaks as non-journalists who simply dumped documents on the public without contexts, while describing their own work in contrast as providing context, filtering, public service, expertise, and on-the-scene reporting. Those outside professional journalism strongly contested that portrayal of WikiLeaks and contended that there was little difference between the work WikiLeaks and professional journalists were doing. We will first examine the two primary areas of discursive conflict regarding WikiLeaks and reporting—whether WikiLeaks did journalism and whether it released documents without context or discrimination—and then move to professional journalists' self-conception of the work they do.

One of the issues near the very center of this paradigm repair effort as a whole was whether WikiLeaks could be considered a journalistic organization. One of the primary purposes of each of professional journalism's areas of repair and boundary work was to define WikiLeaks as being outside the bounds of journalism so as to keep its own profession from being diluted by an actor that challenged many of its core values. But the discussion over whether WikiLeaks could be defined as journalistic was tied most closely to the repair efforts regarding original reporting, as they ended up being connected to work of reporting in some form. That is, in order to explicitly define what journalism was, journalists most often went to terms that described work, rather than ideological values like objectivity or structural attributes like institutionality.

But this sort of journalistic definition and exclusion regarding WikiLeaks did not begin in earnest until mid-2010, when WikiLeaks broke into public prominence and emerged as a serious challenge to traditional journalistic forms. Up until then, news organizations generally treated WikiLeaks as one of their own, if a bit unorthodox in its constitution. Several articles during this time referred to WikiLeaks' members as journalists and their work as reporting or newsgathering (Bumiller, 2010; Jones, 2010a; "Stifling Online Speech," 2008). That changed after WikiLeaks began making its major releases, when the two news organizations that worked most closely with WikiLeaks stated emphatically that the group was not a journalistic one—the *Guardian* did so immediately after the Afghanistan release in July 2010, though the *Times* did not officially and explicitly say so until the fall ("Answers to Readers' Questions," 2010; Wells, 2010)—and writers from other news organizations followed with similar statements (Crovitz, 2010c; Robinson, 2010b; Thiessen, 2010b). Others just as emphatically declared that WikiLeaks and Assange were, in fact, journalists. The language of "WikiLeaks as journalist" came from the alternative media (Scheer, 2010) and professional media criticism (Chittum, 2010; C. O'Brien, 2010b), but also from sources in the professional news media—largely guest commentators and contributors not formally affiliated with the organizations themselves (L. King, 2010; Lemon et al., 2010b). At the *Washington Post*, Adam Penenberg (2011) contrasted his opinion to the repair being attempted by the professional news media, which included "no clear definition of the terms 'journalist' or 'journalism'" (para. 4), but after examining various shield law definitions, he concluded that "Assange fits the definition of a journalist, and what WikiLeaks does qualifies as journalism" (para. 5).

So what exactly were professional journalists' working definitions of journalism as they discussed it vis-à-vis WikiLeaks? And what were the criteria by which WikiLeaks was portrayed as unjournalistic? The answer to the latter question—and some clues to the first—can be found in the second major area of tension regarding WikiLeaks—whether it dumped its documents on the public without any context or filtering. Of all the areas of repair undertaken by the professional news media in relation to WikiLeaks (indeed, of all their areas of description in general), none occupied more of journalists' attention than this one. Dozens of articles and broadcast segments described WikiLeaks as indiscriminately flooding the public with thousands of sensitive, difficult-to-understand documents rather than performing the journalistic functions of editing and adding context; in many of those texts, this description was the central reason given for the difference between WikiLeaks and professional journalism.

This characterization sometimes became part of the shorthand for describing WikiLeaks' work, with it often being referred to in passing as having "dumped mountains of secrets" or a released a "flood" of documents (Erlanger, 2010, para. 1; Levingston, 2010, para. 1). More often, it was part of a concerted argument for WikiLeaks' unreliability or irresponsibility, often in opinion sections or in quotations from commentators in news articles or during broadcast segments. Several writers and commentators complained that the indiscriminate nature of their release left them so incomprehensible and devoid of context to be useless (Applebaum, 2010a, 2010b; Exum, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010; Rieder, 2010). In one typical text, *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum (2010a) dismissed the Afghanistan documents as "nothing more than raw data," concluding that "without more investigation, more work, more journalism, these documents just don't matter that much" (para. 6, 11). Others saw WikiLeaks' primary problem in document dumping as its dereliction of its obligation to the continued functional operation of government and safety of the people affected, particularly U.S. informants (Ri. Cohen, 2010; Crovitz, 2010b; Jones, 2010b; "The Justice Department," 2010). *Post* columnist Dana Milbank (2010) encapsulated this contempt for WikiLeaks' apparent lack of restraint or concern for others' safety: "Assange's indiscriminate dump of American government secrets over the last several months—with hardly a care for who might be hurt or what public good was served—can be summarized nicely by a line from Wilde's play 'A Woman of No Importance': Nothing succeeds like excess" (para. 4). This was the reason, in fact, that the *Times* refused to link to WikiLeaks' publication of the Afghanistan war documents (Thiessen, 2010b). For many within the professional news media, this "dumping" was the central (or only) justification for describing WikiLeaks as being outside the bounds of journalism (Crovitz, 2010c; L. King, 2010; Kurtz, 2010d).

The key terms that served to signify the dichotomy between WikiLeaks' and professional journalists' forms of releasing information were "responsible" and "irresponsible." In the sample studied, forms of the two words were used at least 35 times to refer to either WikiLeaks or professional news organizations; in 30 of the cases examined, the word "responsible" was used to describe professional news organizations, or "irresponsible" (or "not responsible") was used to describe WikiLeaks. Just five times was WikiLeaks or its practices described as responsible. While the terms were occasionally used to describe other paradigmatic elements such as consulting with official sources, they were overwhelmingly employed as a proxy for the difference in approaches to releasing information: filtering and editing information before publication was responsible, while releasing large amounts of information without extensively going through those steps was irresponsible. A statement from a *Guardian* op-ed column illustrates the conception of "responsible" behavior and its dichotomy with WikiLeaks well: "The Guardian, like the New York Times and other responsible news media, has tried to ensure that nothing we publish puts anyone at risk. We should all demand of WikiLeaks that it does the same" (Ash, 2010, para. 11). CNN host Piers Morgan also tied the responsible/irresponsible dichotomy to the idea of indiscriminate publication by saying the *Times* and *Guardian* "are being, in my view, quite responsible whereas I think WikiLeaks putting everything out there ought to be more judicious in their editing" (Crowley et al., 2010). In the minds of professional journalists, the difference between responsible and irresponsible journalistic behavior lay in the editorial process that limited the amount of information disseminated to the public—a process in which they emphatically claimed WikiLeaks did not engage.

Criticism of WikiLeaks' relative lack of filtering and redaction in several of its publications was not limited to a paradigmatic sense, however. Several of WikiLeaks' staunchest supporters, including Pentagon Papers leaker Daniel Ellsberg (Nichols, 2010) and even *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald (2010g), acknowledged their concerns about the lack of redaction in WikiLeaks' releases, particularly its first large-scale document release on the war in Afghanistan. While these writers had understandable misgivings about WikiLeaks' lackluster editorial standards, they did not see it as a reason to characterize the group as irresponsible or unjournalistic, unlike WikiLeaks' critics within professional journalism.

But as potent as it seemed, professional journalism's narrative of WikiLeaks as irresponsible document dumpers did not entirely match the reality of situation. By its second large-scale document release, the Iraq War logs, WikiLeaks was employing a system of "reverse" redaction that was actually more rigorous in identifying and eliminating potentially sensitive names than the U.S. government's own redaction process (Weinstein, 2010). And by its third release, the diplomatic cables, WikiLeaks was publishing only the cables published by its media partners, initially releasing just a few hundred of the 251,000 cables and gradually leaking out a few thousand more over the next few months before the entire cache was inadvertently made public in the summer of 2011 (Gunter, 2011; Shepard, 2010). Even in the Afghanistan war logs found most problematic by its supporters and critics, WikiLeaks held back 15,000 documents to take additional time redacting them (Whalen, 2010a).

Professional journalists noted these facts somewhat regularly as part of their basic reporting on WikiLeaks' activities, though without any particular emphasis. (NPR was goaded into correcting its reporting regarding the number of cables released by a significant public backlash [Shepard, 2010].) CNN and the *Guardian* were particularly diligent in their accuracy about WikiLeaks' actual practices, and the *Guardian*'s editor, Alan Rusbridger, actively sought to debunk the popular notion that WikiLeaks had indiscriminately dumped documents, writing, "The extent of the redaction process and the relatively limited extent of publication of actual cables were apparently overlooked by many commentators—including leading American journalists—who spoke disparagingly of a 'willy nilly dump' of mass cables and the consequent danger to life. But, to date, there has been no 'mass dump'" (2011, para. 18).

Defining the Process of Original Reporting

As a whole, though, those in the liberal alternative media and in professional media criticism were far more vocal than the professional media in their resistance to the idea of WikiLeaks' having indiscriminately dumped documents. (It went unaddressed in the conservative alternative media examined in this study.) Among professional media critics, the *Columbia Journalism Review* was especially vigilant in countering that misconception, with three different writers mounting attacks against it (Chittum, 2010;

Hendler, 2010a; Silverman, 2011). In this area, too, *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald emerged as the chief defender of WikiLeaks' editorial diligence, addressing it in several posts (2010h, 2010i). He was flanked by several other writers in the liberal alternative media, who repeatedly noted the limited release and care in redaction following the publication of the diplomatic cables ("First, They Came," 2010; Gillmor, 2010c).

Despite these protestations, the depiction of WikiLeaks as an irresponsible and reckless publisher remained a dominant form of paradigm repair and boundary work within the professional media, and a primary rationale for denying them a place within the boundaries of journalism. In that repair work, journalists painted a vivid picture of their own reporting and editing work in contrast to WikiLeaks, providing a remarkably rich landscape of precisely what journalistic work they believe distinguishes their field from other similar actors. It is this work that makes up the journalistic conception that this study refers to as "original reporting," and it will be addressed in four particular areas in descending order of their expressed importance among journalists in this case: adding context, filtering and verification, considering the public interest, and expertise and experience.

In professional journalists' minds, the process of adding context—of explaining to the public what the documents were and what their significance was—was the single most significant value they provided to WikiLeaks' document releases. Journalists from the *Times* and the *Guardian* repeatedly touted their own ability to provide this contextualized understanding of the documents. According to them, that context kept the documents from becoming overwhelming to the public ("WikiLeaks: Open Secrets," 2010) and brought them attention they wouldn't have otherwise received (Keenan, 2010). Keller (2011a), the *Times*' editor, pointed to his reporters' ability to draw order from chaos as the attribute of their WikiLeaks coverage that made him most proud, and journalists from both papers made similar statements about what their papers brought to the WikiLeaks publication process (e.g., "Answers to Readers' Questions," 2010; "Ask the Reporters," 2010; Brooks, 2010; Carr, 2010; Greenslade, 2010b). Their argument for self-justification before the public, and their case for their own journalistic value, was most simply put by *Guardian* editor David Leigh in a short video introducing the Afghanistan war logs: "We've trawled through all this data so that you can make sense of it" ("How to Read," 2010). A *Times* editor's note on the diplomatic cables also suggested that this context-adding process went beyond simply adding journalistic value into the realm of moral obligation: "For The Times to ignore this material would be to deny its own readers the careful reporting and thoughtful analysis they expect when this kind of information becomes public" ("A Note to Readers," para. 9). The implied message put an extraordinary value on the process of explaining the news, rather than simply presenting its raw materials as objects of evidence to the public; though the public would be getting the information regardless of the *Times*' actions, the paper was journalistically obligated to give it meaning, rather than letting it stand on its own.

It followed, then, that if the process of explaining the significance of news objects to the public was a journalistic obligation, then to not engage in this process was to be a journalist. This premise was expressed most directly in an interview with *Times* reporter David Sanger on NPR's "Fresh Air" in which, after making a similar point to the *Times* editor's note, Sanger was asked whether he considered Assange a journalist. He replied:

> I don't, and the reason is that I believe what journalists do is not only dig out information but filter it, explain it, put it in context, do those things that you've come to expect of the New York Times and other great American newspapers and other media organizations for many decades. That's a very different thing from simply downloading a computer system and throwing it out onto the World Wide Web (Gross, 2010b).

Sanger later added that for the *Times*, contextualizing information meant that "We are explaining what's new here and what's not. We're explaining what's important here and what's not" (Gross, 2010b). The difference between the *Times*' "commendable" journalistic behavior and WikiLeaks' technical act of publishing was simply giving explanation and context, which imbued the information with meaning and turned publication into journalism. *Guardian* editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger made a similar point in a reader Q&A session when he compared his paper's contributions with WikiLeaks', saying that "we brought something to the party in our ability to search, contextualise, verify, explain etc. They have some very smart people, too, and some very unique technical skills" (Rusbridger, 2010). To Rusbridger, WikiLeaks' actions were of a technical sort, but what distinguished his own paper as a news organization was its ability to contextualize and explain.

Within this framework, WikiLeaks' partnership with news organizations was a tacit acknowledgement by Assange that the value that they provided but WikiLeaks couldn't was in their ability to add context. Numerous articles both from the *Times* and *Guardian* themselves ("20 Things We Learned," 2010; Naughton, 2011) and from the larger professional journalistic community (Applebaum, 2010a; Kurtz, 2010a; "What WikiLeaks Means," 2011) made precisely this point. In their argument, this collaboration meant that an emergent form of networked media had acknowledged the enduring value and relevance of traditional media.

The second paradigmatic aspect of reporting—filtering and editing—is a much simpler process than that of adding context. As professional journalists described it, it involves the application of "news judgment" as a filter on incoming information, thereby verifying its authenticity and limiting the information provided to the public. By doing this, journalists said, they helped impose order on a massive amount of information and curbed its potential danger to informants and other vulnerable parties. Journalists from the *Times* and *Guardian* often pointed out the role that this process played in their handling of the documents ("Answers to Readers' Questions," 2010; Brooks, 2010; Cox, 2010a; Tait, Fernando, Poulton, Gallagher, & Topham, 2010), though they did not ascribe to it nearly as much value as they did to the process of adding context. One *Times* reporter did, however, hint at the importance of the routinized nature of this process when he explained to CNN that the filtering process was what enabled the paper to feel comfortable publishing sensitive documents: "We always felt we could publish the documents if they went through the careful process we normally do" (Phillips et al., 2010a).

What exactly that process entailed in this case was not entirely clear, though *Times* and *Guardian* journalists emphasized several aspects: it was methodical and selective ("Answers to Readers' Questions," 2010; Tait et al., 2010), it involved consultation with experts (Cox, 2010a; Elliott, 2010), and it also involved assessments of both security and newsworthiness ("Answers to Readers' Questions,"2010; Gross, 2010a). Several professional news media members outside those organizations referred to the process approvingly, citing it as a reason for ascribing credibility to the *Times* and the *Guardian* and urging other news organizations to approach the documents the same way (Crovitz, 2010c; Crowley et al., 2010; Jones, 2010b). But this process was highlighted, more than anything, in professional journalists' description of WikiLeaks didn't do in publishing large portions of documents, rather than anything journalists did in particular. Much of that description was described previously as part of the debate over whether WikiLeaks' indiscriminately dumped documents, but only a few professional media commentators contrasted the two explicitly in this area. When they did, the message was simple: WikiLeaks (and the public) would have been better served by adopting a strenuous filtering method like the *Times* and the *Guardian*, rather than simply releasing the documents in one big dump (Crovitz, 2010c, 2011; Crowley et al., 2010; Lemon et al., 2010b).

The third aspect of original reporting that emerged in this paradigm repair process was the application of expertise and experience. These terms were used often to disparage WikiLeaks and tout the advantages of the professional news media, as numerous commentators belittled Assange for what they saw as his lack of understanding of the issues on which he was releasing documents (e.g., Ro. Cohen, 2010; Foust, 2010; Kemp, 2010; Kirchick, 2010). Without detailed experience—particularly "on the ground" experience—in the areas of the world about which he was publishing information, they argued, Assange had no expertise from which to draw on in the processes of filtering and contextualizing his documents. In contrast, the *Times*, *Guardian*, and others in professional journalism held up their own experience as a critical factor in their ability to perform those same journalistic processes (Applebaum, 2010; Leigh & Harding, 2011; Tait et al., 2010).

How was one to go about gaining all of this valuable journalistic experience and expertise? The only means described (and prescribed) was through "on-the-ground reporting," particularly overseas (Kurtz, 2010b; Leigh & Harding, 2011). Interestingly, even Assange himself cited the authority and expertise derived their physical presence and experience in global hotspots as one of the primary reasons he chose to collaborate with the *Times* and the *Guardian* (L. King et al., 2010). Others went further, asserting that the WikiLeaks documents meant little without being accompanied and contextualized by the on-the-scene reporting work done by professional journalists. *The Washington Post*'s Applebaum (2010a) said the documents suffered from a lack of "proper newspaper reporting," concluding that "there weren't any reporters, or any time to do real journalism" with journalists "on the ground," so the documents were unable to be properly contextualized (para. 7-8). The *Columbia Journalism Review*'s Joel Meares (2010b) made a similar point, though less aggressively, characterizing the WikiLeaks documents as snapshots "that demand fleshing out by those who are well-versed in the war from which they sprang. Rather than suggest a worrying future for investigative, on-the-ground reporting, WikiLeaks shows that it's as important as ever" (para. 6-7). These pronouncements indicated a belief that whatever journalistic value the WikiLeaks documents held, it could only be realized when "on the ground" reporting methods, and the experience and expertise they provided, were applied by professional journalists.

One of the key values applied during these journalistic reporting, filtering, and context-adding processes is considering the public interest, the final paradigmatic aspect of reporting. Compared with the previous two aspects, the *Times*' and *Guardian*'s own journalists did relatively little explanation of this point; it was mostly limited to mentions about determining whether pieces of WikiLeaks' information were in the public's interest to publish ("A note to readers," 2010; Greenslade, 2010b; Tait et al., 2010). By contrast, other professional news media members described journalists' consideration of the public interest as a critical part of the reporting and editing process—and one which entails its own distinctive process itself. *Wall Street Journal* columnist Gordon Crovitz (2010a) sarcastically described the traditional process by which a news organization determined whether to publish leaked information as a philosophically oriented one invoking important values: "This often came after journalistic soul-searching on the balance between national security and the public's right to know. How quaint" (para. 1-2). Similarly, in an NPR interview, a *Daily Beast* reporter described the process as serious, philosophical, and heavily value-laden: "Our news organizations go through long, tortured conversations about what to do with that information, whether or not it would indeed endanger national security if we were to make it public" (Amos, 2010).

Just as with all of the other areas of repair, this sense of careful consideration of the public interest was characterized as, in this case, strictly the province of professional journalism—something WikiLeaks did not possess. *Times* columnist David Brooks (2010) insisted that publication decisions were easy for Assange because he did not share the same professional obligation to the public good as journalists did, and several others criticized WikiLeaks for not considered whether its information releases would benefit the public (Crovitz, 2010a; Milbank, 2010); an NPR news piece cited secrecy expert Stephen Aftergood in describing issues of public interest and the public good as "fundamental journalistic questions" that WikiLeaks was not asking (Folkenflik, 2010). And as the *Guardian*'s David Leigh put it, this journalistic concern for the public interest was one of the main reasons it asked WikiLeaks to share the cables with his paper: "It was our idea to persuade WikiLeaks that they shouldn't just dump this stuff, that they should let sensible media organizations have a look at it and analyze it for what was in the public interest as far as we were concerned" (Wells, 2010). As described by journalists, consideration of the public interest was a driving value that distinguished the journalistic process from the process of mere publication—and a value that required a rather esoteric process of its own to apply.

Together, these four aspects formed a picture of professional journalists' paradigmatic conception of original reporting. It was a process of first filtering and editing and ultimately contextualizing raw objects of information (in this case, documents), with the expertise gleaned exclusively from on-the-ground reporting and the consideration of the public interest as a journalistic value playing crucial roles along the way. Without engaging in this process, WikiLeaks couldn't be considered journalistic, and its documents held negligible value; the process itself was the means by which publication became journalism and information became news. No statement captured the faith in this process and the synthesis of its component parts as well as that of *American Journalism Review* columnist Rem Rieder (2010): “Those nuggets [in WikiLeaks’ documents] in and of themselves, however, often don’t tell you much. They scream for context and perspective and interpretation, for insightful parsing by expert reporters. For journalism” (para. 8-9).

During the time that professional journalists were performing this repair and boundary work, WikiLeaks itself moved toward journalism, in its rhetoric and its behavior. The group began making frequent references to journalism in its description of itself on its site (Penenberg, 2011; Savage, 2010b) and in its statements about itself to professional media sources (Assange, 2010b; Roberts et al., 2010a). It made conscious efforts to closely align itself with prominent news organizations—which, as we saw in the section on institutionality, was not necessarily reciprocated by those organizations—and to engage in the type of behavior that many professional journalists considered part of the process of original reporting, such as more intensive editing and sending reporters to the site of a video it released (Domscheit-Berg, 2011; Weinstein, 2010). WikiLeaks seemed to recognize the boundaries that had been set up around professional journalism and seemed to conclude that in order to gain acceptance and attention among professional journalists, it needed to move inside those boundaries.

Professional journalists acknowledged this “move-toward-journalism” and responded in two distinct ways. First, they characterized it as a strategic, even cynical, attempt to be seen as journalistic by the public. In this description, WikiLeaks was attempting to “strike a posture of responsibility” (Carr, 2010, para. 9) rather than actually being responsible; it was “prefer[ring] to be perceived as more of a legitimate journalistic entity" (R. Walker, 2011, para. 7) rather than actually becoming a legitimate journalistic entity. Second, many journalists saw the changes as a genuine shift in WikiLeaks' approach that was part of its evolutionary trajectory as an organization, but they viewed that shift as an acknowledgement of the superiority of professional journalism over WikiLeaks' core networked approach. This condescension toward WikiLeaks' nontraditional form of journalism is evident in statements like the one that Assange "has gradually become more like a real journalist" (Kurtz, 2010d) (implying, of course, that he had been a fake one with his previous methods). Another professional journalist described WikiLeaks' previous approach as "incredibly arrogant" and said that "WikiLeaks is beginning to change its MO to enter into exactly that journalistic code of ethics, which I think is the right way to do it" (Cox, 2010b). Through either method, the superiority of the journalistic paradigm was maintained: WikiLeaks and Assange were either recognizing the superiority of the paradigm of original reporting, or they remained outside of professional journalism for only pretending to adopt its reporting, filtering, and contextualizing processes.

OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity also emerged as an area of paradigm repair and boundary work regarding WikiLeaks, though it was not as vigorously contested in the professional news media as the other three areas. Though there was considerable debate, the overriding depiction of WikiLeaks among professional journalists was of an organization whose explicit political goals made it difficult for it to perform true journalism and undermined the credibility of its information. Objectivity was also the primary area of repair within the conservative alternative media (and more conservative members of the professional media), though it was often described as a function of WikiLeaks' association with the professional news media itself, rather than a reason for dissociation from it.

WikiLeaks was routinely described within the professional news media in terms that did not connote objectivity, but instead indicated varying degrees of extreme political principles. At the most benign level, WikiLeaks and Assange were described as "activists" (Bumiller, 2010; C. O'Brien, 2010a; Schmitt & Sanger, 2010)—a term that Assange himself often used to describe his group (Cohen & Stelter, 2010; Holmes et al., 2010b). Further along the spectrum of political extremity, WikiLeaks was also referred to several times as "anarchists" (Crovitz, 2011; Kurtz, 2010c; Montagne, 2011); this was a description Assange denied (Mitchell, 2010), but one that could be a reasonable interpretation of his own writings around the time of WikiLeaks' founding (Assange, 2006a, 2006b; Bady, 2010). While many of these descriptions were not explicitly tied to journalism, they were stated in such a way to communicate distaste for WikiLeaks' views and skepticism about its credibility. Keller (2011a) described Assange as "a man who clearly had his own agenda" (para. 5), and a *Washington Post* editorial similarly asserted that by calling for war crimes prosecutions based on his Afghanistan documents, "revealed his organization's antiwar agenda" ("Wikileaks' Release," 2010, para. 1), as though Assange had inadvertently let slip a particularly damaging revelation. Elsewhere in the professional news media, Assange was referred to as a "zealot" (Kurtz, 2010c) with "toxic political views" (Schoenfeld, 2011, para. 11). By contrast, the *Guardian*'s journalists and a few others (C. O'Brien, 2010a; Raz, 2010) were often careful to place WikiLeaks' views in the context of its roots in the hacker philosophy, explaining it simply as an advocacy for open information and a severe distrust of power and secrecy (Arthur, 2010; Leigh & Harding, 2011).

While such descriptions did not necessarily constitute active repair, another depiction of WikiLeaks—at the least, as anti-American, and at its most vociferous, as an enemy of the United States—was more pervasive and formed the backbone of the repair and boundary work surrounding objectivity. These characterizations originated in part from journalists' patriotic impulse discussed earlier (Ward, 2010) and conveyed WikiLeaks more in terms of a political or even military actor than a journalistic one, someone who was more interested in attacking and making enemies of the government than objectively reporting on it. WikiLeaks' information releases were quite often referred to not as journalistic acts, but as military ones—as "attacks," "sabotage," or even "waging war" or "cyberwarfare" against the United States (Cox, 2010b; J. King et al., 2010c; Schoenfeld, 2010, para. 10; Stephens, 2010, para. 11). The implications of invoking such language for journalism were clear, but two conservative columnists made them explicit. *The Wall Street Journal*'s Gabriel Schoenfeld (2011) asserted that WikiLeaks had "a decidedly non-neutral objective: combating the U.S." (para. 10) that fundamentally conflicted with the imperative to perform neutral, objective journalism. *The Washington Post*'s Marc Thiessen (2010a) went further, declaring that "WikiLeaks is not a news organization; it is a criminal enterprise" whose sole reason for existence was to distribute the United States government's classified information (para. 1). Even if other journalists would not make such a sweeping statement about WikiLeaks' intent, they were resounding in their assertion that WikiLeaks was devoted to harming the United States at the expense of its aspirations to journalism.

Thiessen's column was one of many statements in the professional news media that explicitly declared that Assange and WikiLeaks were not journalists precisely because they did not practice an objective approach. This distinction was made primarily through creating a dichotomy between "activists" and "journalists"; most descriptions of

WikiLeaks assumed that he could only be one of the two (though there were some exceptions [Bumiller, 2010; C. O'Brien, 2010a; Rich, 2010]). In its profile of WikiLeaks following the release of the Collateral Murder video, for example, a *Times* reporter noted that Assange described himself as both a journalist and advocate but also that he then asked Assange to pick between the two terms (Cohen & Stelter, 2010). Later, a *Times* op-ed deemed Assange an activist rather than a journalist and criticized him for "muddying the water" between the two (Exum, 2010, para. 16). Likewise, a *Washington Post* columnist staked out a distinct line between activists like WikiLeaks and journalists, though he did not define it: "The difference between Wikileaks and the work of muckrakers is the difference between activists and journalists. I'm not arguing that every journalist's motives are as pure as the driven snow, but there is indeed a difference" (Robinson, 2010a, para. 13). Numerous other examples of this dichotomy abounded (Crovitz, 2011; Gross, 2010a; Kurtz, 2010d; Robinson, 2010b); WikiLeaks, as professional journalists set up the options, could choose to be either a news organization or an activist organization; choosing the latter shut itself out from consideration as the former.

The provocative title and packaging of the WikiLeaks' April 2010 video release "Collateral Murder" was by far the most-used piece of evidence for the claim that WikiLeaks' activism was impeding its journalistic effectiveness. The *Times*' Bill Keller (2011a) referred to it as "a work of antiwar propaganda," its title as "tendentious," and its editing as "manipulated" (para. 6), claiming it was that video in particular that alerted the *Times* to WikiLeaks' differing agenda (Gross, 2011). A *Wall Street Journal* column, too, said the video was deceptively edited and revealed WikiLeaks' true mission (Kirchick, 2010). To defenders of the professional journalistic paradigm, the Collateral Murder video was the smoking gun that provided the evidence that WikiLeaks was definitively outside the paradigm of objectivity. Once it was outside that paradigm, the credibility of its work was immediately thrown into question. Speaking on CNN, conservative blogger Erick Erickson drew a straight line between the editing of Collateral Murder and the lack of credibility of any of WikiLeaks' subsequent releases (Sanchez, Yellin, & Baldwin, 2010). Other commentators made the point without explicit reference to Collateral Murder, warning the public and the news media to examine WikiLeaks' releases with a skeptical eye because it had expressed a political point of view (Sanchez et al., 2010; J. King, 2010a).

The perceived damage to credibility done by WikiLeaks' expression of a political purpose was strong enough that professional journalists both within and outside the *Times* and *Guardian* expressed concern those publications' credibility as a result of their association with WikiLeaks (e.g., "WikiLeaks 'Bastards,'" 2010). Several *Times* journalists were asked by other news outlets whether they were concerned about being tied to WikiLeaks' agenda—a question that implied that WikiLeaks' unobjective approach was damaging enough to taint someone's reputation merely by association—and got varying answers. While one *Times* reporter said WikiLeaks' agenda could not defined in simple left-and-right terms (Whitfield et al., 2010b), Keller and another reporter referred to WikiLeaks' views in the context of a reporter-source relationship, emphasizing the need to distance oneself from a source's views while using its information (Kurtz, 2010b, 2010c). Keller made the point most directly in resisting the description of WikiLeaks' relationship with the *Times* as a collaboration because the term "suggests some shared purpose" (Folkenflik, 2010). In a sense, Keller was describing the need for his paradigm repair: He and the rest of the professional news media were concerned that in seeing WikiLeaks work closely with professional journalists, the public would perceive that two shared some deeper paradigmatic similarities. In Keller's view, there were no such similarities, and through the public performance of paradigm repair and boundary work, he intended to persuade the public of that as well.

Objectivity was also the key area of paradigm repair for the conservative alternative media, converging with the professional media in its basic elements but differing sharply in its conclusions. Like the professional news media, commentators in the conservative alternative media were primarily occupied with presenting Assange and WikiLeaks as anti-American and even sworn enemies of the United States. Both the *Daily Caller* and *Big Government*/*Big Journalism* repeatedly characterized Assange as someone who was driven primarily by a desire to embarrass the United States and aid its enemies (Tata, 2010; Treacher, 2010). They also used similar military language to the commentators in the professional news media, like "act of political warfare" and "enemy of the state" (Tata, 2010, para. 3; Yates & Whiton, 2010, para. 1)—though it should be noted that much of this sort of language that appeared in the professional news media also came from conservative columnists (e.g., Stephens, 2010; Thiessen, 2010a). Unlike in the professional news media, there was almost no discussion in the conservative media about whether WikiLeaks' political objectives precluded it from performing journalism; the fact that it was anti-American was enough of an indictment against the group that the question of whether it was journalistic need not even be considered.

The most telling difference between the conservative alternative media's and the professional news media's objectivity paradigms regarding WikiLeaks was in WikiLeaks' relationship to the professional news media. For mainstream professional journalists, WikiLeaks' eschewal of objectivity was reason to limit contact with it, for fear of losing credibility by association. But for the conservative alternative media, WikiLeaks' association with mainstream news organizations was a major reason it was perceived as unobjective and not credible in the first place. The argument was expressed well in a *Daily Caller* column in which thinktank executives Stephen Yates and Christian Whiton (2010) presented WikiLeaks' association with mainstream publications as evidence of his anti-Americanism:

The *Guardian* (London), *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg) and the *New York Times* are three key pillars of the Left intelligentsia and consistent opponents of a strong U.S. foreign policy and national defense. They want an America constrained by self-doubt and able to act abroad only with an international permission slip. This is an agenda presumably shared by Mr. Assange, with whom the organizations allied in this matter (para. 2).

For Yates and Whiton, the primary evidence for WikiLeaks' lack of objectivity was not necessarily anything the organization itself had done, but its association with other professional news organizations it considered unobjective. For the professional news media, questionable credibility began with WikiLeaks and flowed to professional journalists through its associations with them; for conservatives, those credibility concerns went in the opposite direction, starting with professional journalists and tainting WikiLeaks by association. A similar point was made in a *Big Journalism* column (Swift, 2010), and elsewhere conservative writers focused their attacks regarding objectivity almost exclusively on WikiLeaks' professional media collaborators, ignoring WikiLeaks itself (Crowley, 2010; Geller, 2010). To these writers, it seemed, WikiLeaks was relatively unknown and unimportant, unlike the news outlets with which it collaborated, whose lack of objectivity was seen as very certain and highly damaging.

The centrality of the objectivity paradigm in the conservative alternative media's discussion of WikiLeaks is striking, and perhaps quite revealing. Even though members of the professional media may not see conservative media as part of their objectivity paradigm, that paradigm appears to be extremely important to conservatives—perhaps, relative to other areas of the journalistic paradigm, even more important than it is to professional journalists themselves. The difference between the two groups' paradigmatic conception of objectivity is that, quite simply, each group considers themselves to be practicing objectivity and the other to be failing to do so. Though there is not enough evidence from the sample examined in this study to draw conclusions, the two groups seemed to have somewhat different definitions of objectivity, as the dominant value in objectivity for conservatives seemed to be patriotism, while for professional journalists it was neutrality. More than the definitions, though, the two groups disagreed (quite strongly) on who was practicing it properly; professional journalists believed they were doing so (in fact, that they were able to define the norm), but conservatives believed those journalists were merely using objectivity as a cover for ideological leftism. They both agreed on one thing regarding their objectivity paradigms, however: there was no room for WikiLeaks within either of them.

Resistance to the Objectivity Paradigm

WikiLeaks' own statements about its mission and methods during this time were complex and, at first glance, even contradictory. While Assange's writings around the time of WikiLeaks' founding were widely cited in objectivity discourse as proof of WikiLeaks' anarchist agenda in opposition to governments (e.g., Carr, 2010; Crovitz, 2010c; Sexton, 2010), his statements after that point—particularly in 2010—were much more ambiguous. At times, Assange seemed to articulate a goal of undermining regimes of secrecy, saying at a June 2010 forum that WikiLeaks was going after the foundation of secrecy on which institutions rest, something that was "inherently an anarchist act" (Hendler, 2010b, para. 12). But Assange also advocated an approach that is based in the scientific notion of objectivity, in which information is used to test claims and then form conclusions (Boudana, 2011; Ryan, 2009). He told one *Guardian* reporter, for example, that journalism should be more like science, driven by verifiable facts, insisting that “he is neither of the right nor the left—his enemies are forever trying to pin labels on him in order to undermine his organisation. What matters first and foremost is getting the information out. ‘First the facts, ma’am,’ is how he summarises his philosophy to me” (Moss, 2010, para. 17). On the whole, it seems that Assange’s approach is dedicated to achieving scientific objectivity as a *process* through transparency, with an ultimate *goal* and guiding principle of challenging secrecy and exposing injustice. This distinction is evident in such statements by Assange as, “Our goal is just reform. Our method is transparency, but we do not put the method before the goal” (Snow et al., 2010). According to Beckett & Ball (2012), Assange believes that the fact that WikiLeaks objectively presents its source material is precisely what allows it make conclusions and advocate for action based on that material.

This philosophy differs sharply from the strategic objectivity of professional journalism, in which objectivity serves as both a method and an end in itself. Yet it had a fair number of defenders, especially within the liberal alternative media. Within the professional news media, one primary means of defending WikiLeaks’ approach was by contending that while its views were extreme, that did not make its methods dishonest. For example, an early *Washington Post* profile noted that WikiLeaks showed a history of publishing leaks outside of those that fit with its particular viewpoint (Warrick, 2010), and a reporter at a White House press conference after the Afghanistan leaks badgered Press Secretary Robert Gibbs about why he was implying that WikiLeaks’ political views had anything to do with the accuracy of the documents it released (Velshi, Robertson, Boulden, & Rivers, 2010). Through statements like these, journalists were reaffirming the paradigm of objectivity while also allowing WikiLeaks inside it.

By contrast, the primary means in the liberal alternative media of defending WikiLeaks against objectivity repair was to defend WikiLeaks' political goals themselves, presenting them as commendable, or least reasonable. This perspective could be found on rare occasions in the professional media, through guest commentators or columnists noting the value of the transparency for which WikiLeaks was working (Chatterjee, 2010; L. King, 2010; Kurtz, 2010c). But for the most part, it was expounded in the liberal alternative media—led, once again, by *Salon*'s Glenn Greenwald, who described WikiLeaks' function as "unique and incomparably valuable" (2010d, para. 32) and repeatedly urged readers to their defense as one of the few groups effectively fighting government secrecy and keeping powerful bodies from conducting their business in the dark (2010a, 2010c, 2010d, 2010f). Other liberal media outlets were mixed on the value of this purpose (e.g., Marshall, 2010; Drum, 2010), but it found no support in the conservative media.

Finally, in only a few cases, journalists and commentators defended WikiLeaks by attacking the objectivity paradigm itself. In the *Online Journalism Review*, journalism professor Robert Niles (2010) argued that all journalists are looking out for someone's interests, whether it's their readers, their sources, or themselves: "if you have a problem with the fact that Assange has a motivation, I suggest that you might just want to take a look in the mirror, first. *All* journalists are motivated by some agenda in their reporting. Or, at least, they'd better be" (para. 10-11, emphasis in original). And at *Salon*, Greenwald argued implicitly against the objectivity norm in his condemnation of journalists' servile behavior to those in power (2010f, 2010g, 2010j), while another author made the historical case that objectivity has never been crucial to journalism (Gant, 2010). Nonetheless, discourse directly criticizing the objectivity paradigm was rare. Instead, the threat to the objectivity paradigm came not from discourse about it, but from WikiLeaks' acting as both activist and journalist, blurring the boundary between two realms journalists had considered distinct. Professional journalists had difficulties keeping that boundary clear through their discourse about WikiLeaks, but they did manage to maintain a tenuous hold on the legitimacy of the paradigm itself.

In each of these four areas, WikiLeaks threatened the journalistic paradigm by revealing its fundamental inconsistencies; it raised tensions about what it means to be a journalist that the professional news media were never fully able to resolve. Yet it proved useful in highlighting the differences in perspective on what exactly the journalistic paradigm entailed, depending on one's location within, at the margins of, or outside the paradigm itself. The concluding chapter will explore the implications of this encounter with WikiLeaks, both in illuminating the contours of the paradigm and evaluating its viability in a networked journalistic age.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As a whole, the members of the professional news media vigorously attempted to repair their paradigm and re-establish their boundaries in response to the multifaceted challenge posed by WikiLeaks. They portrayed WikiLeaks as deviant and reinforced their own authority to establish and exemplify journalistic norms in a variety of ways, emphasizing the group's instability, political radicalism, and relative lack of verification procedures while contrasting them with their own adherence to established journalistic practices. But discourse also varied in significant ways between news organizations within those general themes, helping reveal a more detailed map of the contours of professional journalism, in addition to the general outline provided in the last chapter. This final chapter will begin by locating each of the groups studied in relation to the professional journalistic paradigm, then follow with a discussion of the limitations of the study and its implications for future encounters between traditional professional journalism and new, networked forms of news.

Locating Organizations Within the Journalistic Paradigm

Nearest to the center of the paradigm of professional journalism in this case was the *New York Times*. The paper led the way in professional journalism's paradigm repair in every area, first establishing many of the themes of discourse regarding WikiLeaks and then continuing to voice them more forcefully and insistently than any other news organization. This may not necessarily indicate that the *Times* holds more tightly to the journalistic paradigm than any other American news organization, though it certainly showed a strong loyalty to many areas of the paradigm here. Instead, the *Times* likely responded most vociferously because it, among all media outlets, was most directly implicated in the challenge. The *Times* was the only American news organization to work closely with WikiLeaks in 2010 and the only one to co-publish its major leaks. That meant it was the only news organization to face the paradox discussed in the opening chapter—how to simultaneously make use of WikiLeaks' valuable information and also distance itself from the group. Other professional news organizations were only associated with WikiLeaks tangentially, by virtue of its claiming the journalistic mantle and performing journalistic activities; the *Times*, on the other hand, was connected to WikiLeaks directly and quite practically. Likewise, the *Times*' repair and boundary work was tinged throughout with personal distaste. While Assange was almost a mythic, iconic figure for others, he was for the *Times* a real, regular presence with concrete behaviors, mannerisms, and effects on its operation, and the often personal nature of its discourse regarding him reflected that reality.

The *Times* was the only news organization whose repair extended beyond the opinion pages to be performed in the news pages in almost equal measure. While news stories in other news organizations were written in a relatively straightforward tone with only occasional instances of overt repair, the *Times*' stories were laced with language that indicated skepticism of WikiLeaks' legitimacy. This was likely a measure of the intensity of its desire to distance itself from WikiLeaks, as well as its particular pervasiveness throughout the organization. While the *Times* certainly defended each area of the paradigm studied, it was less vigorous in its articulation of objectivity, though other news organizations were also relatively unenthusiastic in their defense of objectivity, so the *Times* was not necessarily far from the center of that paradigmatic dimension, either. In all, through both the boldness of its statements and their broad reach among other news organizations, the *Times* was reaffirmed as the key institution in communicating American journalism's professional ideology.

The Washington Post and *Wall Street Journal* echoed the *Times*' repair in many areas, clearly acting not as leaders, but followers in professional journalism's process of ideological self-conception. Though the papers voiced the arguments of paradigm as strenuously as—or more strenuously than—the *Times*, they generally did so after the *Times* had initially raised each point. And unlike the *Times*, both papers' repair was largely limited to editorials and op-ed columns; little of the dismissive language there slipped into the papers' news coverage, unlike at the *Times*. It is difficult to determine whether this divergence reflects a substantive difference between the papers' paradigmatic perspective or simply the result of the *Post*'s and the *Journal*'s lack of direct connection with WikiLeaks. Though the *Journal*'s editorial page more closely resembled the conservative media's paradigmatic perspective in some areas (particularly objectivity), both the *Post* and *Journal* seemed to occupy a similar, if less influential, paradigmatic position as the *Times*.

The broadcast news organizations surveyed in this study, CNN and NPR, were not as firmly pinned to many of the aspects of the journalistic paradigm as the newspapers studied. The two outlets contained a surprising breadth of opinion regarding WikiLeaks and the legitimacy of journalistic norms, much broader than any of the American newspapers. That opinion was generally weighted toward maintenance of the journalistic paradigm, though it included a substantial amount of defense of WikiLeaks countering that paradigm. NPR in particular performed very little paradigm repair; its discourse contained relatively little language or tone that characterized WikiLeaks as illegitimate, irrational, or outside the bounds of journalism. Most of what repair did exist on its airwaves came from representatives of the *New York Times* who were interviewed on its shows. In fact, most of the opinion on these particular broadcast outlets (as opposed to others like Fox News and MSNBC) comes from representatives from other organizations, so while they maintain ultimate control over their communication of their journalistic ideology, that communication is also subject to more influence from other news organizations. Thus, while these organizations are not necessarily less directed by the journalistic paradigm in their editorial processes, their performance of that paradigm in public is less emphatic than in other professional news organizations. This difference indicates a subtle but significant distinction between the degree to which an organization is ruled by a paradigm and the degree to which that organization performs and defends that paradigm in public view. Strong identification with a professional paradigm will typically entail a strong public expression of that paradigm, but this is not always a necessary outcome.

As we move outward from the center of the paradigm of American professional journalism, the first significant divergence from the paradigm—rather than simply a lack of active defense of the paradigm—can be found in professional media criticism. This field straddled the boundary between professional and alternative media, at times defending professional media's usefulness and the continued viability of its paradigm, and at other times directly and indirectly challenging the supremacy of the norms within the journalistic field. Part of this dissension is a function of the fact that this field gives significant space to voices from academia, who are more free from the institutional and routinized strictures of journalism to critique the profession. Professional media critics issued particularly vocal defenses of institutionality and original reporting, while being more inclined to challenge the norms of reporter-source relationships and objectivity. This could be a result of the novelty of the former two areas as challenges to professional journalism. That is to say, the latter values have been the subject of scrutiny for a long enough time to have coherent challenges built up against them, while the former have largely been unarticulated areas of the journalistic paradigm because so few viable challenges against them have been mounted. Additionally, the former values, particularly institutionality, are the values that allow those professional media critics to be professionalized as well, so there may be an element of self-defense to the discourse about those values as well.

The liberal alternative media shared less of the American professional journalistic paradigm than any other group studied. It largely defended WikiLeaks on every front, though its discourse regarding objectivity was rarer and less vigorous than any other area. Liberal media organizations did acknowledge some caveats in their support of WikiLeaks, voicing their disapproval of certain aspects of WikiLeaks' behavior while defending it in other areas. *Mother Jones* was particularly strong in its criticism of WikiLeaks; at times, its discourse was virtually indistinguishable from that of mainstream professional journalism. While it is difficult to ascertain precisely what paradigm the liberal alternative media held because it was not challenged in this particular case, this group clearly operated outside the professional journalistic paradigm, with little regard for the ways in which professional journalists articulated their norms of institutionality and proper reporter-source relationships and reporting processes.

The conservative alternative media were more difficult to place than any other group in the study, as they were both vehemently opposed to the mainstream journalistic paradigm and skeptical of WikiLeaks' networked model as well. Their attacks on WikiLeaks were just as virulent as professional journalists', but they were based more on political grounds than journalistic ones. Objectivity was by far the most significant area of repair for conservative journalists and commentators, but even that area did not constitute a paradigmatic intersection with professional journalism. On objectivity and the other paradigmatic aspects studied, conservative media displayed more disgust with the "mainstream media" paradigm than with WikiLeaks itself. It is difficult to determine whether their distaste for Assange's political views clouded their view of the viability of WikiLeaks' networked model; a (not necessarily feasible) hypothetical organization with similar structure and characteristics but a conservative political aim might have drawn much more support from the conservative alternative media.

The final organization surveyed in this study, the *Guardian*, operates within a different paradigm than the others—the British, or European, professional journalistic paradigm. This paradigm was much more sympathetic toward WikiLeaks, displaying a rare desire to understand the group before attacking it (though this impression may be partly aided by the fact that the *Guardian*'s full falling-out with WikiLeaks came in September 2011 upon after the release of all 250,000 diplomatic cables [Gunter, 2011], after the period covered in this study). The *Guardian*'s repair did indicate some overlap between the British and American journalistic paradigms, especially regarding the centrality of institutionality and original reporting. Still, the American sense of journalistic objectivity that WikiLeaks violated was not a fundamental part of the *Guardian*'s paradigm, and its reporter-source relationships were not threatened in this particular case. Based on its response to the challenge of WikiLeaks' approach, it appears that the British journalistic paradigm, as represented by the *Guardian*, is better equipped to address and adapt to the networked journalism era.

The discourse examined in this study also provides a glimpse of the complementary workings of paradigm repair and boundary work in professional journalism's efforts to reinforce its professional ideology and separate itself from WikiLeaks' networked model. In this case, paradigm repair and boundary work were part of the same process of distancing and reinforcement, often acting in tandem, but with each emerging as especially important in certain facets of discourse. Boundary work addressed more of the fundamental definitional questions involved with WikiLeaks—

none more fundamental than, "Is WikiLeaks journalism?" This led it to be central in the distancing process when issues related to original reporting were discussed. Boundary work's principal function was to set up a divide between "journalism" and "not-journalism" and ensure that WikiLeaks and the professional news media were kept on opposite sides of that divide, keeping journalism's professional boundaries protected.

Paradigm repair, on the other hand, was employed largely in the form of more personal attacks against WikiLeaks. Its purpose was to depict WikiLeaks as an unreliable, unstable, malicious actor that did not share in the journalistic paradigm, and to reaffirm the ability of the journalistic profession to guard against such bad actors. Because of this emphasis on WikiLeaks' isolation and journalism's structural advantages in rooting out deviance, paradigm repair manifested itself most clearly in discourse surrounding institutionality, but it was also present throughout the discourse about WikiLeaks. Through paradigm repair, journalists sought to portray WikiLeaks as a single, rogue actor, which at times played well to WikiLeaks' eccentricities. Yet as professional journalism runs up against more networked journalistic actors in the future, it will find itself less and less able to isolate them as deviant actors. Instead, boundary work may play a more prominent role in professional journalistic discourse regarding networked journalism as a full-fledged ideological competitor rather than a lone paradigm violator.

LIMITATIONS

While this study included a large sample of a broad range of publications, it still only examines a single case, and like all case studies, it is limited in its generalizability. First, it is important not to generalize too broadly within the case itself, as large news organizations can be sites of significant ideological variety and dispute. Some of the people who voiced paradigm repair most strongly in this case were columnists such as the

Washington Post's Marc Thiessen and the *Wall Street Journal*'s Gabriel Schoenfeld who are not physically (or possibly even socially) located within the organizations themselves and whose ideological views do not necessarily represent the organizations as a whole. However, the majority of the repair and boundary work came from a broad range of locations within the news organizations, both more and less institutional—from editorials and editor's essays to blogs, podcasts, on-air interviews, and news articles. While individual instances of repair work should not be misunderstood as proxies for an organization's perspective, the similarity of themes across a spectrum of institutional locations points toward a reasonably generalizable perspective among the organizations studied.

Second, this case's external generalizability is also limited, partly because of the intrinsic nature of case studies and partly because of the particularities of WikiLeaks as a case, which is not a perfect case. Its editorial and organizational direction as well as its relationships with government and the media have been abnormally influenced by Assange's reportedly volatile personality and regrettable personal choices. This may be a case of personal characteristics adversely affecting journalistic outcomes, though that phenomenon is not limited to WikiLeaks, of course. As Beckett and Ball (2012) note, there are plenty of egotists in professional newsrooms who are difficult to work with, though their personal traits are often shielded from impacting their organizations by institutional structures. Assange's personal abrasiveness also led to a significant amount of personally oriented criticism, which can be difficult to parse from the more paradigmatically significant professional criticism. Yet even the personal criticism has latent meaning, especially when it is tied to professional dimensions of behavior, as we saw most clearly in the repair work regarding institutionality. Also, personal distaste does not necessarily bleed into repair work, as we saw happen within the professional news media. The liberal alternative media showed how to register misgivings about WikiLeaks on a personal level while also defending its larger principles, which indicates that the repair work documented within the professional media is not necessarily fueled by mere personal dislike.

WikiLeaks also made some highly questionable decisions in its handling of documents, particularly in its refusal to redact the names of informants and other vulnerable individuals in its Afghanistan document release. It could be posited that the repair work was simply an appropriate response to these specific misdeeds, rather than to WikiLeaks' status as an emergent practitioner of a new form of networked journalism. There was indeed a significant amount of repair devoted to these specific actions, though the repair and boundary work went well beyond that area, touching on almost area of WikiLeaks' existence, many of which had little or nothing to do with its decisions regarding redaction or document security. If repair work had been limited to those decisions, we might conclude that it was specific to WikiLeaks as a case. But since the repair itself touched on much broader issues, it is reasonable to conclude that the professional news media were responding to WikiLeaks as part of a broader challenge as well.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM AND THE NETWORKED ERA OF NEWS

More than WikiLeaks itself, this study is concerned with the interactions between professional and networked journalism and the paradigmatic interplay between the two domains. In WikiLeaks, the professional news media encountered a radically networked news organization, one which possessed many of the qualities that distinguishes networked journalism from its professional counterpart: decentralized structure, open advocacy, organization around networks rather than institutions, and transparency as an orienting value. But WikiLeaks also resembled professional journalism in several key ways, dealing with one of the oldest forms of journalistic information in leaks and processing information editorially and disseminating it widely (Beckett & Ball, 2012). Thus, WikiLeaks presented a radically new networked model for journalism, but one that also overlapped significantly with the traditional professional journalistic model.

This type of overlap is not uncommon in interactions between professional and networked journalism; these two spheres are not separate, but are instead adopting many of each other's characteristics as they come in contact with each other. Networked journalistic actors such as political bloggers and citizen-driven content sites have moved toward professionalized practices in recent years (Kim, 2012; Lowrey, Parrott, & Meade, 2011), and professional journalists have—somewhat begrudgingly—begun to incorporate more open, networked approaches into their journalistic practices (Anderson, forthcoming; Singer et al., 2011). The blurring of the boundaries between these two spheres inevitably produces some definitional and ideological ambiguity, and the WikiLeaks case threw those uncertainties into stark relief. In this case, as Benkler (2011, p. 44) pointed out, it was not feasible for journalists to separate their own work from Assange's without also excluding some of the core pillars of networked journalism and the networked public sphere. So a confrontation with WikiLeaks such as the one in which professional journalism engaged was also a confrontation with the larger networked model of journalism, one in which attitudes toward that model were revealed alongside attitudes about WikiLeaks.

WikiLeaks has shown a great amount of instability during its short existence, and its cultural influence has waned significantly since its peak in late 2010. Assange remains under house arrest, and the alleged source of its four major leaks, Pfc. Bradley Manning, is in a military prison awaiting trial. WikiLeaks has severed ties with its largest media partners, losing out on the global audiences they provided (though it is now working with a larger number of much smaller media partners [Heim, 2012]). As Beckett and Ball (2012) noted, WikiLeaks' model is both far-reaching and uncertain enough that it could move into a number of journalistic and quasi-journalistic realms; as of early 2012, WikiLeaks seems to be moving away from networked journalistic aims, with Assange announcing plans for a talk show and an Australian Senate run ("Julian Assange to Run," 2012; "New Assange TV Series," 2012).

But WikiLeaks' health and stability are not reliable indicators of the health and stability of networked journalism. WikiLeaks is merely a single pioneering organization in this field, and networked journalism is primed to continue to emerge with or without its success (Ludlow, 2010). As Beckett and Ball (2012) put it, "as with so many online innovators before it, WikiLeaks' real significance may be what follows in its wake, rather than its short, turbulent history" (2). What is following is the movement of information through open, networked flows largely unbound by institutional authority or geographical boundaries (Beckett & Ball, 2012; Sifry, 2011a). WikiLeaks is not an aberration, but a harbinger; not a bug in the web, but a feature of it (Sifry, 2011b).

The interactions between professional journalism and WikiLeaks, then, can be a useful indicator of how the traditional values of journalism might be changing (or remaining unchanged) in the face of the emergence of networked journalism. The discourse in this study suggests that at least one major change may be in the works: objectivity may be declining as a core tenet of professional journalistic ideology. Objectivity was clearly still a part of the journalistic paradigm in this discourse, but it was much less vigorously defended than the other paradigmatic elements that WikiLeaks challenged. WikiLeaks' lack of objectivity was much less offensive to journalists than, say, its lack of institutionality. For journalists, this finding suggests that objectivity, once considered the core of the journalistic paradigm (Meyers, 2011), is now no longer the central criterion for acceptance as part of professional journalism. Fox News, for example, does not practice what most professional journalists would consider objective journalism (e.g., Coe et al., 2008), yet it retains its place as part of the professional news media. Similarly, establishing WikiLeaks' lack of objectivity was not enough to establish it as being outside the journalistic paradigm; others areas of deviance were far more important to its exclusion. The only field for which objectivity remained a critical paradigmatic dimension was the conservative media, suggesting that the fixation on objectivity may be becoming more strictly a function of a left-right, narrowly politically oriented approach to media, a sort of relic of the "culture wars" approach to media and politics. For conservatives, this suggests that their desire for journalistic objectivity is driven by a belief that political institutions are fundamentally liberal, and that by distancing themselves from those institutions via objectivity, journalists can better serve conservative interests.

In its place, context is emerging as a significant source of journalistic authority. The professional journalistic case for credibility and authority over information dissemination seems to be shifting from a basis in the practice of objectivity to a basis in the process of understanding and placing information in context. This shift parallels the massive increase in the abundance of information in the networked era. As a response to this increase, journalists are recasting their own value in terms of helping audiences deal with the volume of information they encounter, rather than the philosophical method by which it is gathered. It is, in a way, professional journalism's way of reacting against what they perceive as networked journalism's "information overload."

Alternative media—particularly liberal media—seem to be particularly attuned to the realities of networked journalism and inclined to collaborate with or incorporate it.

This stands to reason, as many of these organizations, including *Talking Points Memo* and *Salon* in this study, were part of the alternative digitally based model of journalism that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a forerunner to the networked journalism model. This history has given those organizations the structural fluidity and openness to change that is inhibited by the large institutions that populate the professional journalistic field. This study revealed pockets of such openness at traditional news organizations, but it also showed that the journalistic paradigm is still deeply embedded in the institutional mindset: The higher journalists were in the institutional hierarchy, the more vigorously they defended the journalistic paradigm. This certainly does not bode well for the continued innovation in and reinvention of professional journalism in the networked era, as it suggests the perpetuation of a culture of resistance to change within journalism institutions.

Novelty certainly does not entail improvement, and many of the principles of the journalistic paradigm may indeed still prove especially valuable in the age of networked journalism. But the values of networked journalism must be taken seriously by journalists, too—understood, evaluated, and if necessary, incorporated into their journalistic framework. In many cases regarding WikiLeaks, this sort of considered reflection was replaced by a reactionary dismissal that may have served a rhetorical function but did little to adapt the philosophy or practice of journalism to the networked nature of the web. As more news organizations follow WikiLeaks' model, straddling the lines between traditional journalistic functions and a more open approach, the degree to which these networked principles are considered and employed will become an increasingly important marker of professional journalism's future course. Either the traditional journalistic paradigm will shift and open itself up to new models for journalism practice, or it will remain rigid and thus cut off a wide range of innovative, vibrant journalistic actors from its purview.

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Vita

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